

INSPECTION REPORT

SMALL HEATH SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Small Heath, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103548

Headteacher: Mr P Slough

Reporting inspector: Philip J H O'Neill
3162

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th February 2002

Inspection number: 193395

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Muntz Street
Small Heath
Birmingham

Postcode: B10 9RX

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A M Choudhury

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
3162	Philip J H O'Neill	Registered inspector	Psychology Special educational needs	Results and students' achievements Teaching and learning The effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form
9614	Carolyn Webb	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development The school's care for its students How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30317	Elizabeth Barthaud	Team inspector	Business studies	Curricular and other opportunities for students
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Health and social care Sociology	
20832	Mohindar Galowalia	Team inspector	Biology English as an additional language	
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Small Heath School and Sixth Form Centre is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11-18, situated within the inner-ring of Birmingham. There are 1278 pupils on roll, of whom 192 are in the sixth form. There are more boys than girls across the school due to a drift towards a successful local girls' school; however, two-thirds of the sixth form students are girls. The school is bigger than most other secondary schools. At almost 98 per cent, the proportion of students coming from homes where English is an additional language is very high. Nearly all the pupils are from an Asian background, mainly Bangladeshi and Pakistani homes where English is not the first language. The percentage of students judged to have special educational needs is about average, whilst the percentage of these pupils for whom a statement of special educational needs exists is below average.

The percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal, at 60 per cent, is well above the national average. Many pupils come from severely disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances. The percentage of students continuing with full-time education after the age of 16, at 85 per cent, is high and has been increasing. About 79 per cent of students enrolled for courses in higher or further education in 2001 after completing sixth form courses at the school: this figure is also high. Overall pupils' standards of attainment on entry, including reading standards, are well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Small Heath is a very good school where pupils thrive in an exceptionally harmonious atmosphere in which everyone is valued and included. There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching, leading to standards that are good and improving. The leadership and management of the school are excellent and underpinned by thoughtful commitment to the school's values and aims. The sixth form is very effective in including students through a curriculum that matches their abilities and aspirations. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and his senior colleagues offer excellent leadership that emphasises the values underpinning the work of the school and focuses clearly on improving standards.
- Pupils learn very well as a result of a very high proportion of good and very good teaching.
- Relationships in the school are a strength; pupils work very well with their teachers and support each other in their learning.
- The school makes very good provision for the personal development of the pupils and they respond enthusiastically.

What could be improved

- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to practise the skills of discussing and developing their own ideas; as a consequence standards of speaking, listening and writing are not high enough.
- Assessment is not consistently used to identify with students how well they are doing and how they might improve.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection took place in March 1997. In response to the findings of that inspection, the governors drew up a clearly defined action plan and were quick to address the issues raised. The most significant improvement has been the strengthening of all teaching teams by establishing greater agreement about policies and procedures across departments. The policy on the development of literacy has been strengthened and is beginning to improve the pupils' accuracy in the use of English, which was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection. The teachers' planning, then a weakness, is now a strength. The pupils with special educational needs are now looked after very well, through improvements in the quality of the individual education plans drawn up to guide teachers in their work with these pupils. Planning for the future development of the school has been strengthened by defining the objectives of planning more clearly and costing their financial implications more accurately.

Apart from the improvements arising from the school's response to the issues raised at the previous inspection, standards of attainment have improved across the school; there has been a very significant improvement in the quality and range of resources for information and communication technology; the sixth form has expanded to the point where it is significantly over-subscribed; the school's standing in the area has been improved; facilities for physical education have been impressively enhanced; and lower-attaining pupils receive additional attention, as do the more able and talented pupils.

The school has the drive, the imagination and the quality of staff to bring about further significant improvements.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and students at the end of Year 13 based on scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	B	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	N/A	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In 2000, the school received the the DfES's excellence award for examination success. In the 2001 tests at the end of Year 9, in comparison with all schools nationally, overall attainment by pupils in English was average, and well below average in mathematics and science. In relation to similar schools, the attainment of pupils in English was very high and well above average in mathematics and science. In relation to similar schools, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6 or above was average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Girls did better than boys, but to the same extent as nationally in English. In mathematics, boys in the school did significantly better than girls, whilst nationally girls did slightly better than boys. In science, boys and girls reached comparable standards in line with the national picture. Attainment in English, maths and science is on a rising trend, faster than the national trend. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, standards in design and technology were above average. In art, history, music and physical education, standards were below average, whilst in geography and modern foreign languages standards fell well below the national averages. Overall, there was little difference between the attainment of different ethnic groups.

Attainment in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well above average for boys and girls in relation to all schools and very high for similar schools. In relation to schools with pupils with similar standards of attainment at the end of Year 9, the standards reached were well above average. The upward trend in results is faster than the national trend. Girls outperformed boys, but to a lesser extent than nationally. There were well above average results in art and design, Bengali, Urdu and physical education, whilst results were well below average in English literature, French and geography. The differences between subjects arise mainly from the quality of teaching. Challenging targets for attainment in the GCSE examinations are set and met. Standards in lessons and in the pupils' work reflect the standards reached in the tests and GCSE examinations.

For students taking two or more subjects at A-Level in 2001, overall attainment was well below average. However, the results for boys were average. This difference relates mainly to differences in attainment between boys and girls on joining the courses. The highest-attaining subjects were art and design and religious studies, whilst the lowest-attaining subjects were business studies, chemistry, computer studies and mathematics. Students' work in the sixth form and the evidence from lessons in general reflect the standards reached at AS and A-Level.

Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on entry as they move through Years 7 to 9. They sustain a good level of achievement as they pursue their courses at GCSE. In general, students in the sixth form make good advances in the development of their knowledge and skills in relation to their levels of attainment on starting their courses. The achievements of the many pupils for whom

English is an additional language are good. Pupils with special educational needs make good advances in learning in relation to the targets set for them in their individual education plans. The more able and talented pupils build well on their already advanced knowledge and skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very highly motivated to learn and do well. They work hard and concentrate well on their tasks. Pupils value what the school offers them and participate with enthusiasm in lessons and in the many extra classes and activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave well in lessons and show respect for each other. The boisterous behaviour of some boys, particularly in the lower school building, hinders their own and others' learning. Behaviour in the corridors and around the school is good; pupils are courteous and friendly.
Personal development and relationships	The very good quality of relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers is a strength of the school, which is a strong community. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered to them to take responsibility for themselves and their learning. They are particularly good at working collaboratively and supporting each other's learning.
Attendance	Good. There is some lateness, especially in the mornings.

This is a harmonious community where pupils feel valued and safe, responding well to the efforts teachers make to ensure that all pupils get the results they deserve. Lessons are generally engaged in with serious intent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is very good across the school and is a key factor in the standards reached by the students and in the steady improvement in examination results. English, mathematics and science are taught very well, as is numeracy across the curriculum. Though literacy is generally taught satisfactorily in subjects other than English, there are too few opportunities for discussion and analysis to support writing. A key strength in many lessons is the quality of planning and the teachers' skill in organising a progressively challenging range of activities. Lessons are often marked by good support for individual pupils and good use of resources. In the sixth form, the skill with which teachers build on what the pupils already know is a striking feature. Lessons are occasionally weakened in Years 7 to 11 when activities lack challenge. In the sixth form, weaknesses in lessons arise where opportunities for discussion and analysis are missed.

Pupils are very good learners and show a real interest in succeeding. They are eager to improve and reach for the highest level of attainment of which they are capable. Teachers are successful in meeting the needs of all students. This is in no small measure the result of the quality of the support for pupils with special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum throughout the school covers the full range of National Curriculum subjects. There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in lessons and when they are withdrawn for additional help. They make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Those pupils who speak English as an additional language receive very good support in the development of fluency.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues of deep spiritual and personal significance. The school is particularly good at celebrating the range of cultures represented within the community while stressing the importance of the school as a family.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils overall. The teachers offer very good academic and personal support to individual pupils. There are some weaknesses in the use of assessment to help pupils improve.

The school works well with parents in supporting their children's education. The links with the local community are a particular strength.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and his senior colleagues provide outstanding leadership to the work of the school. The values of the school are exhibited in all they do. They are clearly focused on raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are diligent in exercising their responsibilities. They have been very successful in building links with the community.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school takes great care to evaluate its work and set targets for the future.
The strategic use of resources	Clear strategic thinking underlies the direction of resources. The use of the library is a strength of the school.

There is an adequate number of qualified and experienced staff to support the teaching of all subjects offered. Resources are good. The library is a particularly good resource. Accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory, but is excellently maintained by the site manager and his team. The balance carried forward from last year's budget is clearly targeted on planned developments.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy and like school • Their children's progress • The quality of teaching that their children experience • Their children are expected to work hard and do their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework their children are given • The information they receive about their children's progress

The parents' meeting held in advance of the inspection was attended by 13 parents. Eleven per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and a small number of these also made written submissions.

The inspection findings confirm the parents' overall positive views of the school. Pupils are happy and make good progress in their learning. The overall quality of teaching is very good and pupils are generally expected to work hard and do their best. Some parents thought that their children did not get enough homework, while others thought there was too much homework. The inspection finds that the use of homework is a strength of the school. The school makes all appropriate measures to communicate with parents about their children's progress.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form caters for 192 students, consisting of 120 girls and 72 boys. It is significantly over-subscribed and bigger than most sixth forms nationally. It has grown from 30 students in 1994 to its present numbers. Almost all the students come from Asian, mainly Bangladeshi and Pakistani, backgrounds, where English is an additional language. Substantial proportions of the students come from disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances. Students' reading standards on joining the sixth form are below the national average standard for their ages. Many of the more able students leave the school at 16 years and join sixth form colleges but this trend is beginning to change. The basic requirement for joining the sixth form, to pursue GCE courses at AS-Level or A-Level, is four GCSE passes at grade C. For pursuing vocational courses, the requirement is four GCSE passes at E grade. The school collaborates with other providers of post-16 education through some shared initiatives to support more able and talented students and in the teaching of science. About one-third of students join the sixth form after their studies in Year 11, with about a quarter moving on to sixth form colleges. Another quarter attend colleges of further education. About 2 per cent of Year 11 students take up the opportunity to join training courses. The remainder enter employment or have not returned the relevant information to the school. The most significant development in the sixth form since the last inspection has been the considerable expansion of the range of enrichment activities offered.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a good sixth form, achieving good standards, where students achieve well in relation to their levels of attainment on joining their courses. Students respond enthusiastically to the very high proportion of good and very good teaching they experience. The sixth form is very well led and clearly directed towards improving standards. It meets the needs of its students well and is cost-effective. It has a very good standing in the community.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good overall.
- Students are highly motivated and work very hard. Relationships are very friendly and supportive.
- The sixth form is very effective in including all students to the extent of their capabilities.

What could be improved

- The requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form is not met.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop the skills of discussion and analysis.
- Accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are improving rapidly. Students currently in Year 12 are working at the national average. Standards are better than could be expected from students' GCSE results. Teaching is very good and the best teaching targets the improvement of individual students clearly and uses a wide range of resources. The subject is well led.
Biology	Good. Attainment at A-Level is below average. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching is good. Experimental work is used well for students to gain first-hand knowledge and understanding of structures and processes. There are not enough opportunities for discussion to deepen students' understanding. The subject is very well led.
Design and technology	Very good. Very good teaching overall leads to above average examination results at A-Level. Students' choice of realistic design projects leads to high levels of motivation. Very good use is made of information and communication technology to support students' work. AS students have too few opportunities for discussion in lessons. Leadership and management are good.
Business studies	Very good. Students make good progress from their attainment in the GCSE examinations. They have very positive attitudes to their work. They are very well taught. They get good guidance on how to improve their work. The leadership and management of the subject are very good.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Courses are popular, with 40 students now following the course for AS-Level. Teachers have good subject knowledge and courses are well supported by good quality resources and technical help. Recent examination results were well below the national average, but current work is in line with expectations. There is insufficient monitoring of students' performance. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed.
Health and social care	Very good. The average standards reached represent very good achievement in relation to the attainment of the students in the GCSE examinations. Teaching is very good and matched to students' needs. The subject is very well led.
Sociology	Satisfactory. Students reach average standards. They make good progress from their attainment in the GCSE examinations. They have good attitudes to their work. They are satisfactorily taught. They get good guidance on how to improve their work, but are not encouraged enough to engage in discussion. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.
Psychology	Good. Standards are around average. In relation to the attainment of students joining the course this represents good progress. The students are taught well and prepared well for examinations. However, they are not always encouraged enough to discuss the ideas they encounter. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
English	Good. Students' levels of thinking and response to the texts studied on the course are often better than average. Well-taught reading skills enable students to engage successfully and enjoyably with challenging material from the literary canon. The quality of purpose and organisation in students' writing is, in general, not strong enough to support achievement at the highest grades. The subject is well led and managed.

Some very good work, arising from very good teaching, was seen in art, key skills and physics. Some excellent teaching was observed in chemistry. In religious education, students studying Judaism reach average standards and are taught satisfactorily. On the evidence of work seen, students studying Islamic studies reach good standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Teachers support students diligently. . They offer many additional opportunities for learning. Students are not always given the refined advice needed to gain the higher grades at A-Level.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed in enabling all students to be included to the fullest extent of their capabilities.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers are accessible when they need helpThey are well taught and challengedThey are helped well to settle when they join the sixth form.They are helped to study independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The advice they receive about future optionsThe information they receive about their progressThe response of the school to their views

Students were overwhelmingly positive in their support for what the sixth form offers them. The inspection does not fully support the view that there is a need to improve the advice and information provided about their progress and their future options. There have been some difficulties recently, but these are being effectively resolved. Inspectors do not agree that the school is not ready to listen to students' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher and his senior colleagues offer excellent leadership that emphasises the values underpinning the work of the school and focuses clearly on improving standards

- 1 The school made very good use of the previous inspection and set about sharpening the ways in which it could continue to serve the needs of all its students. This has resulted in a steady improvement in the standards of attainment reached. The headteacher, who is very well supported by a cohesive and excellent team of senior colleagues, has provided outstanding leadership and a clearly formulated direction to the work of the school. Working as a newly-formed team, the senior team has already become the driving force behind improving the quality of teaching and supporting the good and often very good progress made by students in their work. The headteacher and his team work closely and constructively with colleagues, with the consequence that innovation is experienced as a challenge and not as a threat. The governors are well led in supporting the work of the school and have been particularly effective in linking the school with the community, so that the community and the school work very closely and productively together. The headteacher is skilled at carefully measuring the pace of innovation, respecting what staff already do, whilst offering opportunities for them to develop their confidence and skill. He has been responsible for improving communication throughout the school so that there is common understanding about how key policies and procedures are carried out. He is careful to ensure that the school's documentation does not exist for its own sake, but fulfils the essential purpose of supporting the work of the teachers.
- 2 The school improvement plan is clearly focused on raising standards of attainment. It is very sharply focused on precise actions to be taken and does not trade in unrealistic dreams and hopes. The clear targets that are set for development have the support of all the staff. The current plan is well constructed. It has arisen from a thorough analysis of the school's needs and is rooted in very effective consultation.
- 3 The work of the school clearly reflects its aims. It is very successful in achieving what it sets out to do and does so by continued evaluation of the progress made towards its objectives. A key feature of this is the thorough review of pupils' work books. The school's work in monitoring its performance is enhanced through the tracking of progress towards the targets linked to its status as a Technology College. The results of national tests and examinations are used very effectively to judge the effectiveness of teaching and learning in all subjects; this work is particularly well done in science. The success of these efforts springs from the very good use of ways of predicting grades and by providing the students with the right level of support. In this respect the team reviews, by which performance in all subjects is analysed carefully and appropriate action taken where weaknesses are identified, are very effective and supportive. The school is very good at building on its experience and at comparing what it achieves to the achievements of schools in similar circumstances. In this respect it has a very good relationship with the local education authority and the family of schools with which it collaborates.

Pupils learn very well as a result of a very high proportion of good and very good teaching

- 4 The quality of teaching is very good across the school. Of the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory in all of them, good or better in just over two-thirds, very good or better in just under half. One in every 12 lessons was taught excellently. The quality of teaching is a key factor in the standards reached by the students and in the steady improvement in examination results. English, mathematics and science are taught well, as is numeracy across the curriculum. Though literacy is generally taught satisfactorily in subjects other than English, there are too few opportunities for discussion and analysis to support writing. A key strength in many lessons is the quality of planning and the teachers' skill in organising a progressively challenging range of activities. Lessons are often marked by good support for individual pupils and good use of resources. In the sixth form, the skill with which teachers build on what the pupils already know is a striking feature. Lessons are occasionally weakened in Years 7 to 11 when activities lack challenge. In the sixth form, weaknesses in lessons arise where opportunities for discussion and analysis are missed.
- 5 Pupils are very good learners and show a real interest in succeeding. They are eager to improve and reach for the highest level of attainment of which they are capable. Teachers are successful in meeting the needs of all students. This is in no small measure the result of the quality of the support for pupils with special educational needs. These students are looked after very well through very good management of what is provided for them. Individual education plans are carefully drawn up and based on accurate measures of attainment and on the clear identification of barriers to learning experienced by individual students.

Relationships in the school are a strength; pupils work very well with their teachers and support each other in their learning

- 6 This is a school where the pupils are loud in their praise of the friendliness of the teachers and for the way they feel part of a family. The teachers make every effort to include all pupils, irrespective of talent or temperament, in the full range of what is offered. The pupils, in turn, respond to the care they receive in the respect they show to the teachers and to one another.
- 7 An immediately striking feature of the school is the respect the pupils show for the school environment and the way the environment communicates to the pupils that they are respected. In this regard, the staff are very good role models. This is particularly true of the site manager's team who are meticulous in repairing and restoring the smallest defect that is revealed in the fabric of the buildings. Additionally, the use of displays of artwork around the school is exceptional. Every wall is alive with tastefully organised displays. The care and attention given to the displays of the students' work are particularly impressive. All this expresses a real concern for this school community, where the notion of the school as a family is eminently appropriate.
- 8 In lessons, the teachers are very effective in making clear the agreed boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, whilst preserving positive and constructive relationships with the pupils. A few pupils would test the patience of a saint, but teachers make every effort to engage their interest and enthusiasm by giving them the same care and attention that they give to other more compliant pupils. This does much to sustain an environment where pupils enjoy coming to school, because they feel secure and assured of forgiveness and restoration to the

school community should they fall short of the high standards of behaviour and the quality of relationships expected.

The school makes very good provision for the personal development of the pupils and they respond enthusiastically

- 9 The students' enthusiasm for their work and their willingness to continue to refine and improve their first efforts are key factors in the standards achieved. Their enthusiasm and willingness bear witness to the effectiveness of the school's work in encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to exercise initiative in their work. Students are taught to behave well in lessons and around the school, not because they are constrained by rules, but as a matter of principle and out of respect for the school community. The school's emphasis on developing responsible and mature citizens permeates all its work.
- 10 Students are encouraged to do well and achieve to the full extent of their competence, not for the sake of the school, but as part of their own personal development. They are encouraged to be good listeners in lessons and in debates about issues, soon learning the discipline of thinking through ideas in collaboration with others. They are given every opportunity to work well in groups or individually in independent work. They are encouraged to make good use of the library and the Internet for independent study.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to practise the skills of discussing and developing their own ideas; as a consequence standards of speaking, listening and writing are not high enough

- 11 Teaching is very good overall and teachers often provide some very good support for the development of the students' confidence in the use of language. However, there are some lessons where the use of discussion and debate is limited, so that pupils do not always get enough opportunities to try out their ideas and test them against those of their peers. This means that a minority of students do not establish enough confidence in language to make good progress in their writing. In these cases, teachers tend to use questions that require a limited answer and do not take the opportunity to encourage pupils to extend their answers or invite another pupil to express an opinion about the answers given by their peers. There is not enough emphasis on giving reasons for answers or on comparing different views.

Assessment is not consistently used to identify with students how well they are doing and how they might improve

- 12 The school has done much to provide teachers with an abundance of assessment data, generated from the results of tests and examinations. This information is used well in the analysis of the progress made by the pupils from one stage of their schooling to the next. It is used particularly well in determining target grades. What is not done so well is the use of assessment in lessons in targeting individual students in order to help them to understand how they are doing and how they might direct their efforts towards improvement. There is some good marking, particularly in the sixth form, where the students are given clear direction about how to achieve a higher grade than that predicted on the basis of their performance in the GCSE examinations. Occasionally, students settle too easily for levels of attainment that fall below their capabilities. Others are very keen to improve and aim for high grades in

examinations, but are not always clear about what is required of them to achieve these grades.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 13 In order to continue to raise standards and sustain its current good rate of improvement, the governors and staff should:

Ensure that pupils are given more opportunities to practise the skills of discussing and developing their own ideas by:

using discussion more effectively to stimulate better writing;
implementing the literacy policy consistently in all subjects.

(paragraph 11)

Use assessment consistently to identify with students how well they are doing and how they might improve by:

improving teachers' skills in managing lessons so that they free themselves to work more effectively with individual pupils in order to provide them with clear oral feedback on their work.

(paragraph 12)

Sixth form

Meet the requirement to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.

(paragraph 28)

Provide more opportunities for students to develop the skills of discussion and analysis by:

giving them more practice in justifying their ideas;
using questioning more effectively to help students to relate their ideas to those of their peers and to those of the more significant contributors to the fields they study.

(paragraphs 22, 52, 57, 64, 74, 83 and 88)

Continue to press for funding to improve the unsatisfactory accommodation in the sixth form.

(paragraph 44)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	40
	Sixth form	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	14	10	12	0	0	0
Percentage	10	35	25	30	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	15	10	13	0	0	0
Percentage	7	37	24	32	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1086	192
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	653	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	288	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1259

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	127	83	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	85	72	67
	Girls	67	40	41
	Total	152	112	108
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (48)	53 (49)	51 (34)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	29 (18)	29 (23)	20 (12)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	95	79	71
	Girls	70	43	44
	Total	165	122	115
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	79 (76)	58 (52)	55 (35)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (30)	31 (25)	14 (14)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	118	93	211

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	58	108	116
	Girls	50	90	94
	Total	108	198	210
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (54)	94 (94)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.5 (41.3)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	48	92
	National		N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	33	52

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10.47	14.45	12.55 (12.2)	2.54	4.5	3.78 (1.7)
National	(17.7)	(18.6)	(18.2)	(2.6)	(2.9)	(2.7)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	32	72
	National		76

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	0
Indian	12
Pakistani	886
Bangladeshi	262
Chinese	0
White	14
Any other minority ethnic group	96

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	19	0
Bangladeshi	2	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	87.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	831

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.9
Key Stage 4	19.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4,501,201
Total expenditure	4,496,603
Expenditure per pupil	3,604
Balance brought forward from previous year	233,262
Balance carried forward to next year	237,860

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1283
Number of questionnaires returned	144

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	43	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	56	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	43	3	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	40	8	3	1
The teaching is good.	59	37	0	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	44	8	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	44	3	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	5	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	55	38	1	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	39	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	32	8	1	8

Other issues raised by parents

There were no other issues raised.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- 14 For students taking two or more subjects at A-Level in 2001, overall attainment was well below average. However, the results for boys were average. This difference relates mainly to differences in attainment between boys and girls on joining the courses. The attainment of students entered for fewer than 2 or more A-Levels or AS equivalent was also well below average. There were considerable differences across the subjects in the results of the A-Level examinations. Students taking art and design achieved very high standards. In religious studies, attainment was well above average. Standards in physics and sociology were average, whilst above average standards were reached in psychology. Standards attained in business studies, chemistry, information technology, English literature and mathematics were well below average. Attainment in the business Advanced Vocational Qualification was below average. These results represent mainly good achievement in relation to the students' levels of attainment when they started their courses.
- 15 The inspection of lessons and the students' work confirm the generally good standards reached in the examinations. This is particularly true of mathematics where students make good progress and are set to continue the steady rise in standards achieved over the last few years. In biology, too, students achieve well in relation to their attainment on joining their courses. The work in design and technology clearly reflects the very good standards reached at A-Level. From a previously rising trend, results in A-Level business fell below average as a result of changes introduced by the examination board midway through the course. Standards in lessons in information and communication technology are better than those reflected in the well below average performance at A-Level. The average standards reached in the health and social care vocational course represent very good progress from the levels of attainment the students brought to the course. Students also achieve well in psychology and sociology. Although results in English literature have been well below average, mainly as a result of some weaknesses in writing, students make good progress in relation to their relatively low levels of literacy on joining the course. Students build steadily on their skills of communication, application of number and in the use of information and communication technology to the point where they are adequate to support their work in the courses they follow.
- 16 Students persevere to the end of their courses and progress successfully to relevant and appropriate further education, higher education or employment.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 17 Students are proud to attend this popular sixth form and almost all arrive on time in the mornings. Attendance is good. Students are keen to learn and to take advantage of all the school offers. They respond well to teaching staff's high expectations and benefit from the purposeful and sometimes lively atmosphere found in most lessons. Relationships are very good. Students regularly review and evaluate their work and plan carefully for future assignments in discussion with tutors and teachers. They have priority use of the library area for private study and research. They use this facility well in supporting independent study. A determined and studious work ethic is evident throughout the sixth form, where newcomers are

welcomed and tensions from the world outside are not allowed to disrupt this harmonious community.

- 18 Students willingly give their help and support when asked to do so, both in school and for charities. They are well respected as good role models for younger pupils. Peer mentoring by trained Year 12 students is available for pupils in Year 7 and sixth-formers help with a drop-in centre where mentoring is available. This arrangement is very effective. Students relished the different challenges set for them during a Navy activity day occurring during the inspection, this being a good example of the many opportunities organised by the school to raise self-esteem and promote self-reliance and leadership qualities. Students' well-organised work experience placements, which include some in France, make a significant contribution to learning.
- 19 Students build well on the mature and responsible attitudes developed in school and hold very positive views about the sixth form. They are well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 20 The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Of the lessons seen, the teaching in one out of every 13 was excellent, in one in three was very good, in around a quarter it was good and it was satisfactory in one-third. No teaching was less than satisfactory. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was very good in mathematics, design and technology, business studies and in health and social care; good in biology, psychology and English and satisfactory in sociology and information and communication technology. In the lessons seen in other subjects sampled, teaching was excellent in chemistry, and very good in physics and in key skills.
- 21 The most abiding feature of teaching in the sixth form is the teachers' very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, with the consequence that students are confident in asking questions, knowing that the teachers' responses take them further in their understanding of key ideas. Planning and organisation of lessons generally leave nothing to chance. The students are helped to become fully involved in lessons through some very effective recapitulation of what they have already learned. This was a key characteristic of the teaching of business studies. Students get the help required to work independently. This was a marked feature of a Year 12 lesson in key skills, when the teacher set the tasks, giving precise guidance without over-explaining, thus providing the students with a secure footing for further independent study.
- 22 A key strength in the teaching of mathematics is the teachers' skill in steadily building up the demands of the tasks so that all students remain at ease with their work whilst being systematically challenged by increasingly demanding material. In the best teaching in psychology, students are supported very effectively as they work in groups. The teacher persists in seeking reasons for the students' opinions, thus making them aware of the demands for justification of their work in order to reach the higher grades. On the other hand, some lessons are weakened when the teacher misses opportunities for discussion and debate. What really worked excellently in a Year 13 design and technology lesson was the teacher's very effective mixture of questioning and explanation, which kept the students on their toes. The imaginative use of the students' own work to illustrate key ideas strengthened the lesson even more. In the lesson observed in chemistry, the quality of teaching and learning was excellent. The highly challenging work, stimulating explanations and excellent use of

information and communication technology helped Year 12 students to make very substantial gains in their knowledge and understanding of polymers.

- 23 Skills in the application of number, the use and application of information and communication technology, and communication skills are taught effectively. This is done through the different subjects and through lessons dedicated to covering these aspects of the sixth form curriculum. Teachers make every effort to ensure that all students are supported well enough to feel secure on their courses. Homework is used to very good effect to extend students' work or to provide good opportunities for independent study.
- 24 Students are very good learners and are keen to succeed. This is revealed in the extent to which they persevere in their work even when they experience difficulties. They make very good use of their time in lessons, taking helpful notes and following up their studies through independent reading. As a result of the very good teaching they experience they advance in their knowledge and skill at a good and often very good rate.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?

- 25 The sixth form curriculum covers an appropriate range of subjects and activities, and provides well for a large mix of students from a variety of ethnic, social and religious groups as well as those with special educational needs. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The school offers a wide range of AS and A-Level courses. As well as the more traditional subjects studied at A-Level such as English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, art and history, the school also offers courses in subjects such as Urdu, Bengali, psychology and sociology. Additionally, the school offers vocational qualifications to both intermediate and advanced level in business studies and to intermediate level in health and social care.
- 26 The number of students entering the sixth form has increased over the last three years. The number of boys continuing with their studies has almost doubled over this period of time. Currently, 192 students are on roll (the national average size for a sixth form is 166). Those who choose not to stay on receive appropriate advice about courses offered elsewhere. At the time of the inspection, the majority of students were studying AS or A-Level courses, with a smaller proportion taking combinations of A-Level and vocational courses or intermediate vocational courses.
- 27 All students who wish to join the sixth form have to make a formal application for a place. This helps students to reflect on the implications of committing themselves to sixth form study. In order to enable as many students as possible to continue with their education beyond the age of 16, the entry requirements for courses are set to reflect the levels of attainment achieved by students at the end of Year 11. For entry onto an A or AS-Level course, students are required to have achieved a grade C in four GCSE subjects and for entry onto a GNVQ intermediate course, four subjects at grade E.
- 28 The school does not provide religious education to all students in the sixth form. In this respect it does not meet statutory requirements. The school is currently planning to meet this statutory requirement by working in partnership with other local schools, but this arrangement has yet to be finalised. Opportunities are offered in a number of subjects, biology, chemistry and English as examples, for students to discuss moral and cultural issues.

- 29 Opportunities are presented for students to develop the four key skill areas of communication, application of number and information and communication technology. As examples, opportunities to develop communication skills were observed in health and social care, mathematics and business studies. In business studies and health and social care, numeracy opportunities were identified and in mathematics, science and English students were provided with opportunities to use information and communication technology. The school has recently revised the organisation of the key skills programme to integrate it more fully into subject teaching.
- 30 The school provides a very good range of activities to enrich the curriculum. Sixth form students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They are also involved in mentoring students in the main school, particularly in Year 7.
- 31 The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The way in which a strong sense of values pervades every aspect of school life is outstanding. Pupils are actively responsive to the family ethos of the school and its explicit emphasis on the importance of moral goodness. The school offers pupils a wide range of opportunities for experiencing and appreciating different cultures through the curriculum, through a richly diverse school environment and through extra-curricular activities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

- 32 The school has very good systems to support and monitor students' academic performance. Their attainment, grade predictions, trends and test results are analysed in detail and this extensive information is used well to plan for all to reach their potential. The comprehensive and regularly updated records that are kept of students' progress and their views, as well as their own critiques of work, are borne in mind when teachers plan. Individual target setting is particularly effective in science. Overall, teachers' high expectations and encouragement in lessons, good on-going assessment, very good verbal comments as well as the regular informative marking combine to make sure that students know not only how well they are achieving, but also exactly what they have to do to improve their work.
- 33 Year 13 students receive two informative reports, an informal one in the autumn and an estimated one, based on modular and test results in March. All students receive helpful one-to-one progress reports. Writing their own annual report before seeing what teachers have written is a valuable exercise in self-evaluation and a surprise for some students when they compare their judgements with those of their teachers.

Advice, support and guidance

- 34 The educational and personal support and guidance given to sixth form students are very good. Tutors ensure that individuals have very good opportunities for general or individual discussion of any worries, whether these are personal or academic. Students, whatever their talents or needs, are well supported through the school's effective diagnosis of these and through a very good programme of mentoring. All are free to ask for and select a mentor. All teaching staff are eager to reassure students that they understand their concerns and stresses and offer to help them in any way they can.

- 35 Effective career guidance begins in Year 7. Specialist advisers talk to Year 9 tutor groups. These arrangements work well. Students feel that their work experience placements are of value, but not all feel these are linked to their aspirations. Informal reviews of careers decisions take place at regular intervals and further advice is offered. Courses can be changed.
- 36 Despite the numbers on roll, staff know students well. The school has very effective procedures, rigorously followed, to record attendance and to follow up any absence. The home-school liaison officer gives very good support to the school in seeking the causes of absence. The educational social worker is appropriately involved with the few pupils who need special support. Monitoring of attendance is thorough and parents are made aware of the effect of long holidays taken during term time. Financial rewards for 94 per cent attendance and bonuses for 100 per cent attendance, awarded through the educational maintenance allowance, on a sliding scale, according to parents' income, are appreciated by those who receive them.
- 37 The school provides a good, comprehensive programme for students' personal, health and social education. Assembly themes are linked to this. As a result of the school's high expectations that all will care for others, students are sensitive to others' needs. They are proud of their school, which one described as 'a place where all religions can work well together'. Students are concerned that all feel part of the sixth form, thus demonstrating one aspect of the school's inclusive practice and resulting in a harmonious and hard-working community.
- 38 The school has good procedures for the promotion of health and safety. Risk assessments and fire drills take place regularly. Staff who are appropriately trained in first aid are always on site. The practice of first aid is good. Staff are aware of child protection issues and the guidelines to follow should they have concerns, but none of those responsible for child protection has received recent training.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

- 39 Two of the school's many strengths are the strong and effective links established with parents and students in the sixth form and the partnership all enjoy. Parents are very happy with the support and guidance students receive. They appreciate, too, the extent to which the school encourages and supports the collaboration between school, student and parent. Information for parents is good. There are helpful termly newsletters translated on request, well-written reports issued at consultation meetings and good oral communication. Interpreters are always on hand to make sure parents understand and to facilitate their full participation in discussions. Attendance at meetings is very good. Parents are pleased with and welcome the opportunities to use school facilities and take advantage of the cyber café, run by students in out-of-school hours.
- 40 The school has worked hard to create the good reputation now enjoyed by the sixth form where students mature as responsible adults, capable of making their own informed decisions and developing effective research skills. Relationships are good and the effective school/student partnership is evident in the concentration and hard work seen in classrooms and in the easy relaxed atmosphere found in the social areas where lively debate and friendly banter take place. Sixth form students confidently express their opinions about life at school. Although a few students express doubts about choices they made and the limited advice they felt they had been given about their future options, overall they acknowledge the good support and

encouragement they receive from teaching staff. Students are pleased to be attending this popular and well-regarded sixth form. Ninety per cent of all students responding to the questionnaire they completed prior to the inspection would recommend the sixth form to others.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

- 41 Provision is underpinned by clear and sensible planning. Decisions about the courses provided are rooted in well thought out considerations of cost and benefit. Considerations about the future of the sixth form are embedded in the plans for the rest of the school. Currently, the sixth form operates well within its budget.
- 42 The director of the sixth form gives a clear sense of direction and purpose to his colleagues and is steadily building up a strong system of monitoring and support. The senior team works closely with him in ensuring that what happens in the sixth form is not seen in isolation from the rest of the school. This is particularly true of the tracking of students' progress where attainment in the GCSE is used to inform judgements about progress in the sixth form.
- 43 Financial planning and management are very good. Accounts of current expenditure are readily available, as are statements of the relative cost effectiveness of the sixth form in relation to the rest of the school. The governors are well informed about the state of the budget and are diligent in the exercise of their responsibility for holding the school to account for the quality of what it provides in the sixth form. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough. Teachers are very well supported in their work and have many good opportunities to extend their competence through attendance at a good range of relevant courses.
- 44 Resources are good. The library is used well to support learning. There is a good range of qualified and experienced staff to teach and support the full range of what is provided. The unsatisfactory accommodation is an abiding concern for the school. Classrooms are cramped and the students have very limited social space.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS-Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	15	53	71	13	32	1.1	N/A
Statistics	5	60	N/A	0	N/A	0.8	N/A
Biology	15	53	84	20	34	1.2	N/A
Chemistry	1	100	87	0	42	1.0	N/A
Physics	6	83	86	33	41	2.0	N/A
Design and technology: Product design	4	50	N/A	20	N/A	1.5	N/A
Business studies	11	64	87	9	27	1.2	N/A
Information and communication technology	16	44	N/A	6	N/A	0.7	N/A
Art and design	3	100	88	100	44	4.0	N/A
Art and design: textiles	3	100	N/A	67	N/A	2.7	N/A
Religious studies	2	100	92	100	41	3.5	N/A
Sociology	25	92	88	52	37	2.6	N/A
Other social studies	28	64	74	36	11	1.6	N/A
English literature	27	96	96	33	36	2.2	N/A
Urdu	5	100	N/A	100	N/A	4.6	N/A

GCE A-Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100	87	100	43	7.0	5.8

Statistics	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	8.0	N/A
Biology	8	75	88	25	34	3.0	5.3
Chemistry	8	100	90	25	43	3.8	5.9
Physics	4	75	88	75	40	5.5	5.7
Full design and technology	1	100	91	100	30	6.0	5.4
Business studies	6	83	92	17	32	3.0	5.5
Business Post-16 GNVQ Advanced	3	33				4.0	
AVCE Business	11	91		18		2.4	
Information technology	8	50	86	13	23	2.0	4.6
Art and design	1	100	96	100	46	10.0	6.6
Art and design: textiles	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	6.0	N/A
History	4	75	88	0	35	2.0	5.5
Religious studies	5	100	92	100	38	6.8	5.8
Sociology	17	88	86	41	35	4.7	5.3
Other social studies	20	90	87	61	34	5.9	5.3
English literature	12	100	95	33	37	4.3	5.9
Urdu	5	100	N/A	80	N/A	6.8	N/A
Bengali	4	100	93	75	56	8.0	6.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	11	91		18		2.4	
Health and social care	17	82		24		4.4	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

- 45 The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology. However, statistics, chemistry and physics were also sampled. In chemistry, the 2001 examination results were well below average. Considering the GCSE results, the students'

results indicate good progress. In physics, the 2001 examination results were average.

- 46 Results in statistics in 2001 show that the one student who entered attained grade B. In the last three years, seven students have been entered for AS-Level statistics with five of these gaining pass grades, the highest being grade C. Results at AS-Level overall have been below the national average. Entry numbers nationally in statistics at both A and AS are often so low in some years that national averages are not recorded. However, in terms of prior attainment, all these results represent at least satisfactory progress. Two lessons were observed, one with Year 13 with only one student present. In the other lesson, a large group of Year 12 students were making good progress. They showed a good understanding, for example, of how measures of dispersion are calculated and used. Standards in this subject are improving.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of the provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards in Year 12 are improving rapidly. They are better than could be expected considering the students' GCSE results.
- Students make very good progress, particularly in Year 12. They are eager to learn and the best students confidently explain solutions to the whole class.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers target the improvement of individual students very well. Resources are used very effectively to enhance learning.
- Leadership and management are good and improving.

Areas for Improvement

- Occasionally, students in Year 13 are not challenged sufficiently to persevere and learn formulae and basic techniques rigorously.
- Some students, mainly female, tend to be passive in class discussion.
- Whilst most teachers often use resources very effectively, a few do not use information and communication technology enough to enhance learning in all aspects of the subject.

Standards and achievement

- 47 The A-Level results in 2001 were below the national average, but with half of the six students gaining grades A-C, this was an improvement on recent years. Results in AS-Level were also below the national average and only three of the seven students who attained grades at E or above are currently studying mathematics in Year 13. No top grades in AS-Level have been gained within the last four years but one A grade in A-Level was attained in each of the years 1998 and 1999. In relation to their GCSE results, however, these results, at both levels, indicate at least satisfactory and often good progress.
- 48 The standards of work of current students in Year 13 also reflect good progress, considering their GCSE results. In work and in lessons seen, most students demonstrated a secure understanding of vector geometry in two dimensions and solved equations accurately to determine the point at which two straight lines meet. These students extend their knowledge to appreciate all the possibilities of two lines meeting or otherwise in three dimensions. In one lesson, the teacher's excellent use of computer software helps students visualise things in two dimensions, whilst the

use of knitting needles and rods for students to experiment in three dimensions provided outstanding learning opportunities. The same students are less secure when learning how to solve difficult equations, such as those involving cubic or trigonometric functions, by using a process of repeating calculations to home in on solutions. Despite the clear explanation and enthusiasm of the teacher, the lack of some basic knowledge in pure mathematics on the part of a few of the students slowed up the learning of the new process. However, by the end of the lesson, all students had made good progress and were given suitable homework to reinforce their learning.

- 49 Students in Year 12 came to the course with higher attainment than those in Year 13, although their GCSE results are below those studying AS-Level mathematics nationally. Almost all show a good understanding of how to derive formulae for arithmetic and the more complicated geometric progressions. They all apply these formulae accurately and most show confidence in doing so. The best students, using correct terminology and logical arguments, explain how some of the more straightforward formulae are derived to the others. These students make the same very good progress in studying other functions. All students draw accurate diagrams of graphs by hand to demonstrate a secure understanding of key concepts. Almost all reinforce this by using the appropriate function on graphical calculators accurately.
- 50 A large group of students in Year 12 are studying GCSE mathematics, having obtained D and E grades in the GCSE examinations. The progress of this group is very good. Almost all students demonstrate a secure awareness of what a range of graphs would look like on a co-ordinate grid. They work confidently, matching equations to graphs.

Quality of education

- 51 Teaching is very good. Teachers work very hard for their students and know them very well. They generally match work well, including homework, to the needs of individual students. They make very good use of resources. Occasionally, students in Year 13 are not challenged sufficiently to learn formulae and techniques rigorously. Relationships with students are very good. In an excellent lesson with Year 13 students on vector geometry, the teacher requested the highest-attaining student to demonstrate vectors in three-dimensions for the others, using knitting needles. She ensured that all students consolidated their understanding and application of two-dimensional vectors first by reinforcing skill in solving algebraic equations graphically by using computer software to check visually where vectors intersected.
- 52 In a very good Year 12 lesson on progressions, students had previously been given homework dependent on their levels of attainment to prepare for this lesson. The teacher quickly and efficiently summed up the progress that students had made at home and adapted the prepared activities accordingly. In the Year 12 lesson on aspects of complex numbers, the teacher shared the objectives clearly with the class. This helped with the timing of the well-structured activities in the lesson. Confidence was built up cleverly using hand drawn graphs, checked by graphical calculators. This led naturally to the use of algebra to solve the quadratic equations necessary to find the solutions to equations that were new to the class. Whilst teachers check on the written work of the most passive students, strategies need to be considered to allow these students to benefit from the confidence that participation in group discussion ultimately brings. Teaching in the re-sit GCSE class and the teaching of the key skill in the application of number are also of a very good quality.

- 53 Students usually learn very well, particularly in Year 12. They are very attentive and most work very productively. The very best students anticipate future work and make good use of their textbooks to read ahead. Some students, mainly female, are a little passive in class discussion. This slows down their progress. However, all students in Year 12 work hard. Occasionally some students in Year 13 show a lack of commitment with homework. All students work well together, enjoy mathematics and respect their teachers and the school's resources.

Leadership and management

- 54 The very good teaching and learning result from the good leadership and management of the subject. Schemes of work are good, teachers are deployed well and resources used very effectively, but information and communication technology is not used enough in all areas of the subject. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection, when standards were poor and teaching, though sometimes good or very good, was usually satisfactory.

BIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- The students achieve well and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students have a very positive attitude to learning biology.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvements

- There are too few opportunities for discussion and for independent learning in lessons.
- There is insufficient focus on language and learning skills.

Standards and achievement

- 55 The 2001 A-Level results were below average. Biology results were significantly lower than other subjects in the school. This gap is wider at AS-Level. This is narrowed in the final year of A-Level. During the recent years, the results have improved from well below the national average to below the national average. The very small relative proportion of boys and girls does not allow a sensible judgement to be made on how well they are doing in comparison to each other.
- 56 Achievement is good. The students achieve higher grades at A-Level than would be expected on the basis of their results in the GCSE examinations. The gain is more marked at A-Level than at AS-Level. This is reflected in students' work and in lessons. Folders of higher-attaining students are well organised. Students carry out independent work, making extensive good quality notes on all aspects of the syllabus. They consider associated ideas in explaining biological principles and processes, for example, photosynthesis and the role of DNA in the synthesis of molecules. Students' information and communication skills are sound. A few AS-Level students do not make accurate use of the subject vocabulary in communicating their knowledge and understanding. Most students, however, read well when asked to share read information.

Quality of education

- 57 Teaching is good. Three out of four lessons are good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and is used effectively to provide intellectual stimulus and for accelerating acquisition of facts, principles and processes. Lesson planning is well structured. This allows productive use of time in most lessons. The emphasis on raising teachers' expectations of students is improving the rate of progress and standards of attainment. Methods match tasks and there is good emphasis on learning through enquiry. Teachers regularly assess how well students are acquiring new knowledge and skills and provide appropriate guidance. This helps students make sustained progress. Emphasis on literacy, numeracy and use of information and communication technology is sound. Marking always aims to be positive and to point out how to improve. However, there is insufficient focus on the development of skill in writing or on how best to organise work in order to help lower-attaining students become more effective learners. In most lessons, there is not enough emphasis on independent learning and discussion to deepen students' knowledge and understanding.
- 58 Students' attitude to biology is very good. They find the subject enjoyable and stimulating. They work hard in lessons. However, some students do not read enough to engage well in lesson discussions.

Leadership and management

- 59 **The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Significant changes in teachers' expectations of their students have raised standards. The review of the curriculum has brought out changes to meet students' needs more effectively. Assessment arrangements are good. The staff is well qualified and support learning beyond the normal teaching hours. The technicians provide good support for teaching. Monitoring and evaluation of students' performance and setting targets are well developed. Students' targets are reviewed and reset at regular intervals to enhance their performance. Resources are used well. Links with other institutions are very good in providing mutual support.**

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focused solely on design and technology. The GCE AS and A-Level courses in design and technology were inspected. The two courses are reported under one heading.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- A-Level examination results are above average.
- The students are taught very well.

- The choice of realistic design projects leads to high levels of motivation.
- The courses are very well led and managed.
- Very good use is made of information and communication technology to support students' work.

Areas for improvement

- Class sessions in Year 12 to give students more opportunities to learn by discussion and research, rather than having information provided for them.

Standards and achievement

- 60 Standards in the A-Level course are high. Examination results have been consistently above the national average since the previous inspection, although only a small number of students have been entered each year. In the 2001 examination, students' results for design and technology were significantly better than for their other subjects. In the 2001 AS examination three students obtained pass grades, one of which was at the highest level and two were unclassified.
- 61 Current work at A-Level is of a high standard. Students have a very good understanding of all elements of the design process. Their choice of projects keeps them in close contact with their proposed clients. For example, a display item for a fast food chain has led to a local and national manager being intimately involved with a developing design, including its interim modelling stages. Students understand relevant industrial processes and have appropriate levels of skills in making. Their high motivation is a significant factor in the good progress they make.
- 62 Students' standards of work at AS-Level are good for this stage of the course. They have a satisfactory understanding of the environmental aspects of design. As a result of very good teaching, students carry out a detailed analysis of everyday objects with due attention to how they are made and the industrial processes involved. The work of some lower-attaining students lacks sufficient detail.
- 63 In both courses most students use information and communication technology independently to support their work. For example, in Year 12 most students make excellent use of the department's very good information and communication technology facilities to produce digital images of their work and to produce very well presented product design analyses.

Quality of education

- 64 The overall quality of teaching is very good, ranging from good to excellent. The best lessons are very well organised, leading to excellent interaction with students. This produces high levels of motivation and results in students making at least good and sometimes very good progress. Teachers encourage students to choose real life design opportunities to which they respond very well. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This is very effectively employed when working with individual students, which ensures that all have equal access to the course. In some lessons teachers use questioning techniques very effectively to extend students' knowledge. In some whole-class AS-Level lessons, students are skilled at taking notes, but have too few opportunities to deepen their understanding by being involved in discussion.

- 65 The courses are very well led and organised. Action to bring about improvement is taken where necessary. For example, assessment procedures for the AS-Level course have been improved since last year. In both courses, teachers now make very good use of information from the examining board to indicate to students how they can attain at higher levels. The courses are well supported by high levels of very good resources and accommodation. A number of A-Level students use their projected grades as bases for university entrance to follow mechanical engineering or computer based courses. One student recently won a Young Engineer award. Since the previous inspection the department has been successful in increasing the number of student following courses in design and technology.

BUSINESS

The inspection focused on the business A-Level and the Advanced Vocational business course.

Overall provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Teaching is very good; all teachers within the department are well qualified and have very good subject knowledge.
- The three teachers teaching the business courses work very effectively as a team to teach high quality courses for the students. They all have high expectations and as a result all students have a very positive learning experience in this area of the curriculum.
- Lessons are well structured with a range of planned activities, which effectively help students to build upon their knowledge for each unit of work.
- Effective procedures are in place to enable the teachers and the students to monitor the progress made throughout the course.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for students to apply and develop their skills in handling number.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to access the Internet to undertake research.

Standards and achievement

- 66 Whilst standards for all the courses offered within this curriculum area fell below national averages in 2001, results for the previous two years show an improving trend. The decline in results in both the advanced and intermediate GNVQ courses in 2001 can be attributed to some extent to the changes introduced midway through these two-year courses by the examination board. The changes in the way that the key skills elements of these courses was assessed in 2001 led to some students failing the course completely, despite having completed satisfactorily all the specific business elements. Six students completed a two-year GCE A-Level business studies course in 2001 and five achieved a pass within the C-E range. Three students completed a two-year advanced business GNVQ, one of whom achieved the full award and the other two, partial awards. Eleven students followed the one-year advanced vocational business course and all but one achieved a grade within the C-E range. Of the 11 students who followed the new one-year AS course, seven achieved a pass within the B-E range. All these students are now studying business

to A-Level. Fifteen students completed a GNVQ intermediate course and nine achieved the full award.

- 67 In lessons and work seen standards are very good. Current students joined their courses with a good level of prior attainment. For example, students in Year 12 were set their first business assignment within the second week of term for completion before October half term. Their work folders, containing the notes recorded and research undertaken to support the development of this assignment, contain clear evidence of good gains in knowledge over that period of time. There is also evidence of analytical thinking as opposed to simply recording facts. Students in Year 13 following the Advanced Vocational course were required to plan and organise an event in school that would raise money to be donated to charity. To achieve a successful outcome they were required to work collaboratively to agree and produce a business plan, seek opinions through devising questionnaires, negotiate time and space for the event with members of the school staff, sell tickets, market the event, oversee it and produce financial accounts. The planning, execution and standards achieved in this activity were very good
- 68 Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment despite the fact that not all students have followed a business studies course before entering the sixth form. Students for whom English is an additional language or have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress in relation to the standards they brought to the courses.

Quality of education

- 69 Teaching is very good. All teachers have a very good knowledge of all aspects of this subject. They teach in a lively and interactive way, which captures the interest of the students. Lessons are thoroughly planned and incorporate a wide range of teaching methods to ensure that all students achieve well. As a direct result, students are well motivated and display very positive attitudes to learning. In one Year 13 lesson observed, students were asked to undertake a skills audit using a curriculum vitae presented to a company by a prospective employee. From a job description produced by the company, they were required to assess how the skills offered by the employee would match the needs of the business. Students were encouraged to exchange ideas within the group and then undertake the audit on an individual basis. As a direct result of this strategy, all students undertook the task with confidence and made good progress. In a Year 12 lesson, students were investigating the different strategies used by companies to sell their services. As a direct result of the very focused and probing questioning technique used by the teacher, all students made significant gains in knowledge over the course of this lesson. In all lessons observed, students were regularly expected to recall knowledge gained from previous lessons and apply it to a new context. Students are aware of their progress to date in relation to each unit of work completed. They know what to do to improve upon their current performance and are aware of the final grade towards which they are working.

Leadership and management

- 70 Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum leader supports her team very well in both planning and reviewing the courses offered. Often two teachers are present within one classroom and this enables staff to regularly monitor and assess the work completed by both the students and each other. Helpful schemes of work and assessment criteria relating to each course unit are in place

and are used well. The business studies area is well resourced. Students have easy access to computer facilities during each lesson.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The GCE AS and A-Level courses in information and communication technology were inspected. The two courses are reported under the same heading.

Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- The courses are well supported by very good quality resources and technical help.
- The choice of real life projects leads to good motivation.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough analysis of examination results to identify specific areas for improvement.
- There are not enough opportunities to develop discussion and skills in investigation.
- There are too few opportunities for higher-attaining students to work at their own, more rapid, rates.

Standards and achievement

- 71 The results of the 2001 A-Level examination, the school's first time of entry, were well below national averages. Students' results were significantly lower than for their other subjects and boys' results were significantly lower than those of the girls. In the AS-Level examination less than half of the students obtained a pass grade, with particularly poor results in the theory papers.
- 72 The current work of students in both courses as seen in lessons and portfolios and evident from discussions is satisfactory. Boys and girls reach comparable standards. A-Level students understand the differences between commercial software packages and how these might be appropriate for different circumstances. They have a clear understanding of how information and communication technology applications relate to real users. Higher-attaining students show a very good understanding of the stages of the design of computer applications. For example, they take account of the importance of testing, because this was identified as a weak area in their previous work to AS-Level. They produce clear user guides for their information and communication technology applications. Theory portfolios are rather disorganised and do not provide a good basis for examination revision.
- 73 AS students have sufficient understanding to construct and interrogate linked databases, taking account of such elements as the need to create mail-merge facilities. Some higher-attaining students are not offered sufficient opportunities to proceed at their own pace. Students now benefit from separate lessons to cover theoretical topics, which were the greatest points of weakness in the AS-Level examination. Well-organised teaching leads, for example, to students developing a satisfactory knowledge of health and safety aspects of working in an information and communication technology environment.

Quality of education

- 74 Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, and in one lesson they were good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, which they use effectively when

working with individuals, often giving them constructive verbal feedback. However, in some lessons where work is teacher-directed, teaching is less effective. In these lessons, the teacher does not provide sufficient opportunities for all students to take responsibility for their own learning, or to participate fully in class debates. As a result, students do not develop the discussion and investigational skills that lead to greater depths of understanding. Teachers are effective in guiding students to choose coursework topics linked to real needs, which also results in students having high levels of motivation and enthusiasm. For example, one student was seen producing a good quality system of interrelated databases to be used by an existing car spares company, where it is being trialled. Students enjoy the course and see its relevance for their lives. A number of the A-Level students intend to study computing at university.

Leadership and management

- 75 There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. Satisfactory leadership has led to the establishment of the examination courses, attracting 40 students in the current Year 12. High quality, easily accessible computer resources and technical help, generous numbers of good quality textbooks and printed materials support the courses very well. There is insufficient analysis of examination results and students' current performance to identify specific areas for improvement. Having an inadequate background in computing at the appropriate level is a disadvantage for some students starting the AS course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and Social Care is offered at intermediate GNVQ level in Year 12. Presently, three students are studying at foundation level and 14 students at intermediate level. The provision of the foundation level is a very appropriate new initiative.

Overall the quality of provision is **very good**

Strengths

- Students achieve very well in relation to their GCSE results.
- Teaching is very good and matched to students' needs.
- The subject is very well led. Planning is excellent and lessons provide a wide range of learning activities.
- Very good attention is given to literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- Discussion and written assessments provide supportive and developmental feedback to students.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not visit enough local care settings.
- The majority of students do not take the opportunity to work with health and care providers as part of the school's work experience scheme.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Standards and achievement

- 76 Overall, standards are average. In 2000, 14 students were registered for the intermediate course. Two students attained merits and eight students passed the course. Two students did not complete the necessary units. In 2001, the pass rate was very similar, three students attained merits and three students were unclassified. Results show that since 1994 the majority of students have completed their courses and their achievement in relation to their average point score at GCSE has been very good. The provision of these courses in the sixth form helps those students re-sitting GCSE examinations by providing a flexible addition to their other learning commitments and a route into A-Level subjects. Courses are mostly taken up by girls, but there has been a small number of boys in previous year groups and their achievement has been very good and similar to that of girls. Many students on these courses eventually pursue a career linked to care, with nursing, classroom assistant, and child care being popular destinations of previous students. Present students report that they enjoy the subject and use it as a stepping stone to access other courses.
- 77 The attainment of the majority of present students is in line with the national average. Most students enter with an average E grade at GCSE and a reading age of 13 years. From this low base their achievement is very good. They are still reliant on their teacher, but all students can find accurate information from a variety of sources and share ideas in group situations. Their assignments are thorough and mostly well presented with good use of information and communication technology and subject-specific vocabulary. Students do not have sufficient first-hand experience of health care settings. They are unable to discuss the range of services provided locally or nationally and contribute very few ideas from outside the classroom. Good basic skills in information and communication technology enable students to transfer information from the Internet to a poster advertising a care organisation. When working independently to identify national bodies a few lower-attaining students transcribe directly from their research material and do not fully understand the scope of the health care involved.

Quality of education

- 78 Teaching is very good overall, mainly because of methodical planning, the sharing of objectives at the start of each lesson and the focused questioning. The teacher has very good subject expertise and draws from a wide knowledge of care settings. Teaching encourages students to carry out independent research and develop their reasoning and enquiry skills within a clear supportive structure. The teacher prepares appropriate tasks for those students studying at foundation level, helping them to make very good progress. Emphasis is frequently given to the development of students' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Opportunities to teach these key skills are identified in each unit of work. Students are taught one lesson a week in a specialist information and communication technology room and this has improved their knowledge and understanding of processes and programmes. The opportunities for students to visit health and care centres are limited. Health and social care is a popular subject and students enjoy working in small groups and pairs. They have good relationships with their teacher

and enjoy the independent learning ethos of their courses. These positive attitudes contribute to their very good learning. A few students are reluctant to take up offers to visit or work in homes, hospitals and clinics. The result is that they do not understand the practice of health care or the demands of the sector.

- 79 Assessment is thorough, regular and informative. The teacher reviews and evaluates homework, tests and assignments, giving students areas for improvement and time schedules both in writing and in an individual interview. Students really appreciate the help and guidance provided by this thorough assessment system.

Leadership and management

- 80 Leadership and management are very good. Students' very good achievement is directly attributable to the teacher's knowledge of the students and her recognition of their individual strengths. Very good documentation and good resources support the teaching and the students feel these are a positive factor in their learning. There is no subject base and no area for storing the resources. Lessons are taught in various rooms throughout the school. This limits teaching strategies and does not allow students' work to be appropriately displayed and valued. The course provides good opportunities for students' personal, social, moral and cultural development through the many ethical and social aspects of the syllabus. The department has moved forwards since the previous inspection and met the new challenges of the evolving health and social care curriculum very successfully.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

This curriculum area did not form a specific focus for the inspection, but art was sampled. In the one lesson seen teaching and learning were very good. Students showed good standards in their work and were making very good advances in the development of their knowledge and skill.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on psychology and sociology. Religious education was sampled. In the one lesson seen, students were taught satisfactorily, but were achieving well. Standards in their work were average.

PSYCHOLOGY

Overall provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards achieved at A-Level are good.
- The students are eager learners and work hard to succeed.
- Teaching is generally good.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching methods used sometimes limits the level of students' critical involvement in lessons through discussion and debate. This is particularly true of Year 13.

Standards and achievement

- 81 Results at A-Level in 2001 were above average. Standards of attainment have fluctuated around the average over the last three years. The students joining the course show a wide range of attainment, but all make good advances in their work as they become familiar with the course. A good level of achievement is sustained through the course. This results from good assessment of work and appropriate preparation for examinations. Progress is slowed slightly in Year 13 where teaching does not always challenge students enough. Boys and girls reach comparable standards. In lessons and in other work the standards reached by students overall are consistent with the results achieved in examinations. In Year 12, most students are clear about different theories invoked to explain conformity and see the significance of these in understanding themselves. In Year 13 students describe and compare the main accounts of mental disorder, in some cases showing considerable analytical skill. In the study of theories of cognition, though they all readily recount different theories, they are less confident in showing the differences between them. The course is increasing in popularity. Most students stay to the end of the course and enter for the examination. Many students express an interest in studying psychology beyond A-Level.

Quality of education

- 82 The overall quality of teaching is good, but ranges from satisfactory to good in individual lessons. At its best, teaching engages the enthusiasm of the students, helping them to see the point of what they study to their understanding of their own lives. In one stimulating lesson in Year 12, for instance, looking at models of abnormality, the students were challenged by a progressively demanding sequence of lively activities, ranging from brain-storming to discussion. The teachers' questioning encouraged the students to value their own ideas by placing them in the context of the psychological theories with which they were familiar. The students, in turn, showed considerable confidence in trying out their ideas, becoming increasingly at home with some demanding theories. Teaching that is satisfactory has some strengths, for instance in the care taken to ensure that students understand fundamental concepts. It is weakened, however, by missed opportunities for students to test their ideas through discussion and debate. A strength of all the teaching seen is the quality of the guidance and support given to individual students, through the careful marking of their work.
- 83 The students show a real enthusiasm for the subject, seeing it as relevant to the understanding of their own lives. They are good at taking useful notes and in following up work in lessons through independent study. They are good learners, eager to work to the full extent of their competence. The quality of relationships between the teachers and the students is a strong feature of this department.

Leadership and management

- 84 The department is soundly led and is supported by clear documentation. The team works effectively in creating a good learning environment for the students, supporting one another in building up the range of strategies needed to engage the interest and enthusiasm of the students. Procedures for keeping track of students' progress are good. The department responded well to the findings of the previous inspection: teaching has improved and the course has become increasingly popular.

SOCIOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Attitudes of students are very good. Students are attentive and work hard to succeed.
- Achievement of students is good. From low points scores at GCSE they attain average standards overall.
- Marking is thorough and gives students a clear indication of how to improve their essays and assignments.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not encourage sufficient discussion and debate.
- The cramped accommodation and resultant seating arrangements inhibit group work and discussion.
- The department does not analyse and use results to promote higher standards by focusing teaching and learning where it is needed.

Standards and achievement

- 85 Sociology is offered at GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary levels. Courses are popular and well established and students now have to be taught in two groups in both years. Over the previous four years attainment has fluctuated a little, but is broadly in line with the national average. Students joining the course show a wide range of attainment and all make advances in their understanding of prominent theories. Students' achievement is good when compared to their GCSE results and low reading ages on entry to the course. In previous years, a small proportion of students attaining A-B grades achieved much better grades than predicted, based upon their GCSE performance. Boys and girls achieve comparable standards, though more girls than boys join the course.
- 86 The 2001 results and the work seen during the inspection indicate average attainment in both Years 12 and 13. In lessons, discussions with students and work observed, good progress is seen from Year 12, where students develop their reasoning and vocabulary, to Year 13 where they discuss concepts more fluently with an awareness of the basic foundation of the subject. Higher-ability students are confident and articulate and extend their thinking beyond the initial topic; for example, when learning about health they are able to understand the role of the media in creating levels of panic. However, students frequently accept only one perspective and do not always challenge or debate sufficiently. Students organise and present their assignments very well, showing an understanding of methodology and a pride in their work. Lower-attaining students lack depth in their study, especially in the evaluative content.

Quality of education

- 87 The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features, and as a result the learning of students at all levels of attainment is at least sound. Teaching has clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students at the start of lessons. Short active analytical tasks encourage students to research information in small groups and pairs. Relationships are very good and students are prepared to ask for help and clarification. Teachers' subject knowledge is mostly good and homework is set and marked regularly. Consistency in practice varies, but most of the teaching lacks rigour and challenge. Students are not always encouraged to challenge everyday

assumptions and stereotypes through discussion and debate. In some lessons, teaching does not make use of contemporary events; for example, in a lesson on education the opportunities to learn from students' wealth of experience at school were missed. Marking is thorough and gives students a clear indication of what they need to do to improve. The knowledge and understanding that students have are frequently checked at the start of lessons and students appreciate the specific targets set for them and discussed with them by their teachers. Students' attitudes are very good. There is a good level of engagement in all lessons and students want to succeed. A few students do not actively involve themselves in discussion even though teachers make every effort to include all members of the class.

Leadership and management

- 88 Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are now three subject teachers in the social sciences department and this enables students to access a wider range of teaching approaches and sociological views. Monitoring of teaching has identified strengths and weaknesses in provision and appropriate action has been taken. While no direct use of information and communication technology was observed in lessons, students' own research findings in their assignments were well presented, using computers. Although teachers encourage communication skills and the use of numeracy when students collect and examine data, none of these key skills are systematically written into the schemes of work. There is not enough analysis of performance data and results of examinations. The department has a wide variety of sociological textbooks in the teaching base and the school library holds a good supply of supplementary texts. The rooms in the sixth form base are too small for most groups in this subject and severely limit teaching strategies. They are cramped, poorly ventilated and on wet days become damp and oppressive.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focused solely on English.

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths:

- Strong subject knowledge underpins teaching that is always at least good.
- Students take great pleasure in applying themselves to challenging texts with vigour and determination.
- Students' insights are often subtle and perceptive, always informed by a clear framework of personal values.

Areas for improvement:

- The development of students' writing skills is inconsistent and unfocused.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are poorly developed.

Standards and achievement

- 89 Students who take AS and A-Level English literature make better progress than in the other subjects they take. Final attainment is still well below national averages, but is showing steady year-on-year improvement. The numbers following the course are increasing and the standards observed in the current Year 12 are better than those in the current Year 13.
- 90 Students are keen and willing to engage in discussion. Their level of thinking about the texts studied and their response to them are often better than average, including challenging traditional works by Chaucer and Dickens, as well as modern drama by, for example, Edward Albee. Comments are based on a very good knowledge of these texts, demonstrating an intellectual curiosity that is often subtle and sensitive. In a lesson on Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, there was a palpable fascination with the issue of the 'son' which lasted into subsequent lessons. Students are enthusiastic about understanding and exploring character, but at the same time appreciate that character is the author's construct. It is not often that students' oral contributions are extended, however, and more opportunities for planned oral work are needed. A lesson on Charles Dickens' novel, *Hard Times*, illustrated how well students respond to narrative form. Two girls gave a presentation that skilfully interwove personal comment with a sophisticated understanding of how Dickens' use of symbols is part of the novel's meaning.
- 91 Reading skills are well developed through the school, providing an excellent foundation for the demands of AS and A-Level. Students apply themselves with determination to the texts studied, not being put off by difficulties in the language encountered. Their enjoyment leads to thoughtful interpretation. Inferential reading is much in evidence. At times, however, there is an over-emphasis on literary devices and techniques, which hinders rather than helps students' engagement with their reading. Similarly, strong dissenting voices, such as the boy who admires Iago, need to be explicitly encouraged in order to encourage a more analytical approach to the views of established critics.
- 92 The standard of written work seen is much weaker than the quality of students' oral responses to their reading. Students are often good at producing isolated insights, but struggle to order these into a sustained argument that is informed by a clearly thought-out personal response. This is not helped by vague titles that lack the challenge of a question format. In their writing, students lack confidence in their own judgements, indicating that teachers need to think more carefully about how downloaded essays and notes are used. Students need more opportunities to write at length fluently, with accompanying attention to purpose, organisation and accurate use of standard English. This entails more teaching explicitly directed towards improving writing skills.

Quality of education

- 93 Teaching is good overall, underpinned by very secure subject knowledge. Good opportunities are provided for students to work independently; these they approach in a very positive way. Very good relationships with their teachers encourage students to sustain their concentration. A challenging lesson on Emily Bronte's narrative techniques ranged widely across, for example, her framing devices and the presentation of love in the novel. The teacher ensured that the students' comments remained focused and relevant throughout. Teachers are very aware of the assessment objectives required for the course and keep the teaching focused on these. At the same time, they are skilful at balancing this with the students' enjoyment of literature, an enjoyment that is manifestly shared by their teachers. It is

very refreshing to hear, for instance, a Year 12 student, quoting Kant or describing the influence on Edward Albee of the Theatre of the Absurd and post-existentialist ideas, all from his own reading.

Leadership and management

- 94 The subject is well led. Teachers work well together in an informal way and provide much mutual support. The head of department responded thoughtfully to the previous inspection report and instituted some important improvements, particularly in the area of reading skills. Monitoring and evaluation have not been developed well enough yet to ensure that marking and assessment are always carried out consistently.