



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Washwood Heath Technology College

Birmingham Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 17-18 November 2003

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Washwood Heath Technology College
Type of school:	Secondary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Headteacher:	Mr G B McHugh
Address of school:	Burney Lane Stechford Birmingham B8 2AS
Telephone:	0121 784 7272
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The Interim Executive Board, address as above
Chair of Interim Executive Board:	Mr C Knight CBE
Local education authority area:	Birmingham
Unique reference number:	103489
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs M Hollingsworth HMI
Dates of inspection:	17-18 November 2003

Introduction

1. Washwood Heath Technology College is situated in Stechford. There are 1426 pupils on the roll including 147 in the sixth form, with more than twice as many boys as girls. Around 80 per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, most of whom are of Asian heritage, with family origins in Pakistan or Kashmir. Over 78 per cent speak English as an additional language. While most families are established in the area, a small but growing number of pupils have recently arrived in England and are new to English. Almost half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, a proportion which is well above the national average. Although the intake includes some higher-attaining pupils, there are more pupils whose attainment is below average when they enter the college than is the case nationally. Twelve per cent of the pupils are on the college's register of special educational needs at the 'school action' or 'school action plus' stages, and a further 1.56 per cent have a Statement of Special Educational Need.

2. The college was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2002. The inspection was critical of the governance and many aspects of the work of the college and, in accordance with that Act, the college was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The college was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in September 2002, and in January and June 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

4. In November 2003, five HMI returned to inspect the college for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

5. Sixty five lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff and the chair of the interim executive board. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the college's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

6. The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the college has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

Main findings

7. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the college no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards are rising, as shown by a range of indicators. Following a fall in 2002, the results in the 2003 National Tests at the end of Key Stage 3 showed a rise in English and a significant improvement in mathematics and science. In the GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grades improved each year between 1999 and 2002 then stayed at the same level in 2003. Although it was well below the national figures, it was in line with that for similar schools. Across the broader ability range results have also improved. Results for those who complete their course post-16 rose significantly last year but are below the national figures. While the proportion of higher grades has increased, many students failed to achieve their targets;
- the pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. In one third of the lessons observed they made good or very good progress. The pupils' good attitudes to work promote their progress in many lessons;
- the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in almost nine out of ten lessons and good or very good in around a third. About half of the teaching that was unsatisfactory or poor was in mathematics. Across the college, teachers' relationships with the pupils were friendly and good humoured. The teachers planned the lessons well and chose and prepared the resources carefully. The lessons were often well structured and smartly paced. Most teachers used the three part lesson to good effect and many used questioning well, although sometimes the girls did not play a full enough part in answering questions or discussing ideas;
- overall, teachers make too little use of assessment to help them match work to pupils' ability, prior attainment and learning need. Despite a well defined marking strategy, the quality of marking varies too much;
- the college collects a significant amount of data on the pupils' achievement but does not analyse it or use it systematically to help to raise standards;
- the curriculum is broad and balanced and includes faiths and community languages. The college adjusts the curriculum to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils; for example, in Year 7, the pupils follow a foundation course that helps them settle into college and, at Key Stage 4, the curriculum is differentiated at three levels matched to the pupils' abilities. The curriculum in the sixth form has satisfactory breadth; it includes vocational and academic options at intermediate and advanced levels;
- there is a good range of extracurricular activities including those with a sporting, cultural and religious focus, and out-of-hours learning;

- the provision for pupils with special educational needs varies between subjects. Teachers know the special needs of the pupils but make little use of the information to plan their lessons. Although many classroom assistants make a good contribution to the pupils' learning, in several lessons their role in whole-class sessions is not well defined;
- provision for newly arrived pupils is satisfactory: they are taught separately for language-based subjects for a few weeks and have their practical subjects with the rest of their year group, but more could be done for them when they are in other lessons;
- the headteacher's leadership of the college is strong and purposeful; he has set clear priorities for action. Communication with staff, pupils and parents is good; staff are well supported and relationships both within the college and with the wider community have improved significantly. The morale of staff and pupils is good. Most teachers have been receptive to change and willing to accept advice; senior managers have benefited from a wide range of resources within the local education authority (LEA) and beyond to help with improvement. Some senior and middle managers have shouldered their responsibilities well, others have not been as effective. The management of the mathematics faculty has particular weaknesses;
- although the management of the sixth form is satisfactory, there is no clear or coherent vision for its future development. The provision in the sixth form is not cost-effective because some teaching groups are very small;
- there is too little rigour in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies and the work of faculties by both senior and middle managers;
- the interim executive board that replaced the college's governing body in 2002 has fulfilled its statutory duties, holding the college to account and playing a full part in supporting the staff and headteacher;
- the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. There is a good learning atmosphere in the great majority of classrooms. The pupils are keen and want to do well but, although they are willing learners, they often remain passive when the teaching is not good enough to engage them fully. Around the site the pupils behave sensibly and treat each other considerately;
- attendance figures have been steady over the past three years and, at 90.1 per cent, are just below the national figure. Unauthorised absence is around the national average. Punctuality to lessons is good;
- the ethos of the college has markedly improved. Provision for the pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development takes due account of their religious beliefs and traditions and engenders respect for the beliefs of others, although too few students participate in assemblies in the sixth form. There are wide-ranging opportunities for the pupils to take

responsibility; for example, through the college council and the buddy system which pairs less confident younger pupils with older pupils.

Key issues

8. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the members of the interim executive board, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- monitor and evaluate the college's work with more rigour;
- improve the quality of teaching;
- make better use of assessment for learning and use data to track pupils' progress;
- improve provision for mathematics;
- develop a clear vision for the sixth form and improve its cost effectiveness.

Inspection findings

Standards of achievement

9. Standards are rising, as shown by a range of indicators. Following a fall in 2002, the results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 showed a rise in English and a significant improvement in mathematics and science. The proportion of the pupils achieving Level 5 in English rose to 49 per cent, a rise of two percentage points from last year and 23 percentage points since 2001. In mathematics, 50 per cent of the pupils achieved Level 5, compared with 40 per cent in 2002 and 42 per cent in 2001. The results for science improved from 39 per cent in 2001 to 48 per cent this year, following a fall to 35 per cent in 2002. Between 1999 and 2002 the pupils' average point score rose from 27.5 to 29.2, with a further rise in 2003 to 30.1. These figures were below, and in the case of mathematics, well below the figures for schools nationally, and below the college's targets. Nevertheless, this year's results are in line with those for schools where a similar proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The college has set challenging targets for 2004.

10. In the GCSE/GNVQ examinations the proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grades rose each year between 1999 and 2002 to 35 per cent, and stayed at this figure in 2003. Although this is well below the national figures, it is in line with that for similar schools. Across the broader ability range results have also improved. The proportions of pupils gaining one or more GCSE/GNVQs at A* to C rose from 95 per cent in 2001 to a provisional figure of 98 per cent in 2003, just below the national figure and above the figure for similar schools. For the pupils gaining five or more passes at A* to G the corresponding figures rose from 77 to 94 per cent, which is above the national figure and well above the figure for schools where a similar proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

11. In this year's end-of-Key Stage 3 tests in English, girls outperformed boys, reflecting the national picture, particularly in the proportion achieving the higher Level 6. The college's analysis of performance in the subject by ethnic groups shows the widest gender gap at Level 5 to have been among the white pupils. In this year's GCSE examinations in English, almost one third of the pupils entered attained grade C or above compared with two fifths of the entry in 2002. The difference in achievement between girls and boys at GCSE was less marked than in the national tests at Key Stage 3. English was the highest performing of the core subjects in the college at GCSE but results were little different from the other core subjects at Key Stage 3.

12. In lessons, standards in English were generally below national expectations. However, standards are beginning to improve since the staffing of the department has stabilised and there is a more consistent and focused approach to preparing the pupils for external tests and examinations. Most pupils listen well to their teachers and to their peers, showing respect for, and interest in, others' views. Although some pupils are keen to speak in lessons, many are reluctant to talk other than in pairs or small groups. Girls often lack the assertiveness to make themselves heard in groups dominated by boys. Many oral contributions are brief and the pupils seldom develop ideas or opinions without prompting and encouragement from their teachers. In spoken and written language alike, few pupils draw on a sufficiently wide range of imaginative vocabulary or use impersonal structures where the context requires it. The pupils are given limited opportunities to read out loud; while mechanical reading skills are generally accurate, few pupils are able to use variations in tone or pace to demonstrate their understanding of subtleties of meaning. The pupils' use of critical vocabulary and their ability to analyse and evaluate the effects of their reading are below the expected standards in both key stages, but are improving in response to the teachers' determined use of the appropriate terminology. In their writing, the pupils make many basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar; however, pupils in Key Stage 3 have a sound understanding of the main features of different genres of writing and in Key Stage 4, the pupils' work shows a developing sense of the needs of different audiences, although too many colloquialisms and informal uses of vocabulary are still evident.

13. In mathematics, in this year's national tests at Key Stage 3 similar proportions of girls and boys achieved Level 5, but the boys' performance at the higher levels was stronger. The results were broadly average compared with those for similar schools but were below the targets set by the LEA and the college's estimates. In the GCSE mathematics examination in 2003, the proportion of the pupils who attained an A* to C grade fell slightly to 24 per cent which is well below the national average. As in 2002, the figure masks a significant difference in performance between the boys and the girls, at 13 and 28 per cent respectively. The proportion attaining an A* to G grade rose by 20 percentage points to 87 per cent, but again there was a marked gender difference.

14. The standards of work observed in lessons and in pupils' exercise books confirm that attainment in mathematics is below average overall. The most able pupils are generally attaining standards that are in line with national expectations, but too few are working at levels above the age-related expectations. The most able pupils in Year 11 are studying material drawn from the higher-tier GCSE specification; for example, factorisation of quadratic expressions, proportionality, areas of sectors and lengths of arcs. However, much of the teaching adopts a skill-based approach, and the pupils have limited opportunities to

apply their mathematical knowledge in a range of contexts. The lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 were able to calculate the area of rectangles and find fractions of quantities, but had limited experience of solving problems. The pupils in Year 9 were able to solve simple equations. Some staff taught a range of strategies for the development of the pupils' number skills, including non-calculator methods, but this was not consistent across the faculty.

15. In science, the college's performance in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was below the national figures but above those for schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. Boys marginally outperformed girls at Level 5, but did so by a greater margin at Level 6. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, 31 per cent of pupils attained Grade C or above and 97 per cent of the pupils gained grade A* to G. This is similar to the national figure.

16. Scientific enquiry is more secure at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. There is good preparation for the investigative coursework in GCSE but there are fewer opportunities for practical investigations at Key Stage 3. The pupils' progress in science was strongest when they participated actively in tasks such as paired discussion and small-group debate, because they used recently learned knowledge skilfully and worked hard to apply these scientific concepts. In these situations, some pupils demonstrated scientific knowledge and understanding that was in line with, and sometimes above, the national expectations for their age; for example, when an able group of Year 8 pupils used high-level scientific language to discuss types of blood vessels.

17. Results for those who complete their course post-16 rose significantly last year but are below the national figures. While the proportion of higher grades has increased, many students failed to achieve their targets. In English, students in Year 12 are not yet achieving the expected standard in their response to literary texts because their background knowledge of Shakespeare's language and his social, cultural and historical context is very limited. In the AS and A2 examinations in English in 2003, the small number of candidates all achieved grades broadly in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. In mathematics, three students sat the AS examination in 2003; two attained Grade A and one a Grade B, and these results represent good progress. There were no students taking A-level mathematics. The results in the re-sit GCSE examination were poor; for example, in mathematics, none of the 24 students achieved Grade C and nearly half were ungraded. Those students who are currently following GCSE re-sit courses are not reaching standards that are sufficient to gain them the target Grade C.

Quality of education

18. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 56 lessons and good or better in 22 lessons. There was some good teaching in most subjects and very good teaching in art and design, design and technology, music and geography. About half of the unsatisfactory teaching occurred in mathematics. The quality of teaching has improved significantly over the period of special measures. Although there was some good teaching in both key stages and the sixth form, there was proportionally more in Key Stage 3 than elsewhere.

19. Where the teaching was most successful, lessons were well planned and plenary sessions were used effectively to review key learning points. Some teachers were very skilled at using sequences of questions to probe the pupils' understanding and to assess the progress

in learning they had made. The pupils' interest was engaged and retained by the variety of activities and by the brisk pace of work, when clear deadlines for the completion of each task were emphasised. Teachers insisted upon the importance of correctly using key subject terminology. The management of behaviour was secure but unobtrusive in the best lessons; relationships between teachers and pupils were invariably friendly and good humoured and classroom assistants played a full part in encouraging independent learning.

20. Weaknesses remain in some of the teaching; these were occasionally found in lessons that were judged to be satisfactory overall. In a few lessons, the teacher's introduction and some activities were allowed to go on for too long so that the pupils' interest waned and they became restless and uninterested. Activities sometimes lacked sufficient challenge to enthuse the pupils and questioning skimmed the surface of the subject, giving the pupils too little encouragement for them to think for themselves. There is some very good marking, but some that is too superficial. A copy of the college's marking guide is in each pupil's exercise book, and provides an explanation of how the pupils' work is to be marked. Nevertheless, the quality of marking varies widely and some is too perfunctory to help raise standards.

21. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, it took insufficient account of what the pupils knew and could do. Activities were generally unadventurous and did not interest the pupils. Classroom routines were not secure and so the management of behaviour was sometimes obtrusive and inadequate.

22. The quality of teaching in the sixth form broadly mirrors that in the main college. In nine of the 11 lessons seen the teaching was at least satisfactory; it was good in three lessons and unsatisfactory in two lessons. The best teaching enabled the students to research ideas of their own and probed their opinions through challenging questioning. In the unsuccessful lessons, the students were given routine tasks to do that did not interest or engage them. In one such lesson the pupils showed their disenchantment by arriving late and making little effort; their progress was negligible.

23. The quality of learning was satisfactory or better in 55 lessons and good or very good in 23 lessons. In the majority of lessons, the quality of the pupils' learning and the extent of the progress they made reflected the quality of the teaching. The college environment is one in which most pupils are ready to learn. The pupils were generally attentive and were willing to participate in activities, showing interest and persevering when they encountered difficulties. Most listened carefully to instructions and many worked enthusiastically. Some pupils relied too much on the teacher for help, especially when they lacked confidence as independent learners or when they were unable to draw easily on previous learning. Opportunities to learn through talk in lessons were sometimes limited by the pupils' reluctance to speak at length or to speculate. In the few lessons where learning was unsatisfactory, it reflected weaknesses in the quality of the teaching.

24. Assessment information is now stored in a database and senior managers have the facility to use information and communication technology to analyse and evaluate the students' progress over time. An assessment calendar has been drafted to co-ordinate the collection and analysis of pupil data throughout the college. The college makes appropriate use of data from a national organisation to forecast Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 results. In a

recent development, the students have been set minimum target grades, based on their prior attainment. These are pasted into the students' exercise books and are intended to form the basis of a dialogue with their teachers about their progress. Most students know their targets, and some know the levels they are currently attaining, and, for some staff, the process has raised their expectations of what the students can achieve. Learning mentors are assigned to the students who are underachieving. However, the process has only recently been introduced and is not yet having sufficient impact on classroom practice. In lessons, assessment for learning is not yet well enough established.

25. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets national requirements. It also includes community languages and Islamic studies. The college adjusts the curriculum to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils; for example, in Year 7, the pupils follow a foundation course that helps them settle into college and, at Key Stage 4, the curriculum is differentiated at three levels matched to the pupils' abilities. The curriculum in the sixth form has satisfactory breadth; it includes vocational and academic options at intermediate and advanced levels as well as a small number of entry and foundation-level courses. There is a good range of extracurricular activities including those with a sporting, cultural and religious focus, and out-of-hours learning including residential trips and visits to theatres and places of interest outside Birmingham.

Management and efficiency of the college

26. The college has made good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the inspection of March 2002. The headteacher's purposeful leadership has provided a strong steer for college improvement and set clear priorities for action. Communication with staff, pupils and parents is good; staff are well supported and relationships both within the college and with the wider community have improved significantly. Staff morale is good: most teachers have been receptive to change and willing to accept advice. Senior managers have made good use of a wide range of resources within the LEA and beyond to help with improvement.

27. The senior management team operates with clear lines of accountability and tasks are delegated appropriately. Change has been initiated effectively and, for the most part, managed and carried through soundly. Although senior managers have responded positively to the new demands placed on them, some do not take sufficient responsibility for interpreting and driving whole-college initiatives, and have depended heavily on guidance from the headteacher and external consultants to identify areas for improvement and carry through change.

28. While most middle managers give a good lead to staff and manage many aspects of their faculties well, there are weaknesses in mathematics, where curricular planning, assessment, leadership and day-to-day management all have significant weaknesses.

29. There is too little close monitoring and evaluation by both senior and middle managers of the impact of policies and the work of faculties and of the sixth form. Senior managers have relied on trust and goodwill rather than formal procedures and, while this has been sufficient to secure the improvements so far, much more could be gained by more rigorous procedures that focus more clearly on the desired outcomes. The monitoring of teaching, for example, has been supportive of staff but, until very recently, piecemeal and

lacking an evaluative edge that would promote improvement in those who are less receptive to change.

30. Although the management of the sixth form is satisfactory, there is no clear or coherent vision for its future development. Independent learning courses, using flexible learning packages, are provided, appropriately, in a few AS subjects such as law, philosophy and physics where there are very small numbers. With the exception of some courses of community interest, such as Arabic, Urdu and Islamic studies, the college set a minimum of eight students for most courses in 2003-4; however, as was the case during the inspection of March 2002, the sixth form is not cost-effective overall.

31. The interim executive board (IEB) that replaced the college's governing body in 2002 has fulfilled its statutory duties, holding the college to account and playing a full part in supporting the staff and headteacher. The partnership between the chair of the IEB and the headteacher has been both challenging and productive. A monitoring and intervention group, comprising senior officers from the LEA, the headteacher and the chair of the IEB has monitored the college's progress effectively.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

32. Significant improvements have been made to the learning environment since the inspection of March 2002. There are many attractive displays in corridors and communal areas that celebrate and give recognition to the pupils' work and their involvement in extracurricular and enrichment activities; for example, photographs of outdoor education, a sixth-form visit to a special school, accounts of a trip to London by gifted and talented pupils, displays of work in GCSE fine arts and, in the entrance hall, a very attractive display of printed silk. The quality of display in classrooms is variable, but the best affirms and supports the pupils as learners.

33. Provision for the pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is good overall. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils were harmonious; in lessons, the pupils listened courteously to their teachers and their peers, and generally waited their turn to speak. Increasingly, the teachers are providing opportunities for pupils to work and discuss ideas in pairs or small groups; this helped to build up their confidence in a number of lessons. Around the site, the pupils behaved sensibly and with consideration and were rarely boisterous. They were friendly and helpful to visitors, and were willing to discuss their work. The college offers various opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility. The year and college councils continue to give active representation of the views and ideas of pupils; for example, the pupils suggested that "smart cards" might be introduced for payment at lunchtimes, and discussed their ideas for fundraising for charities. Older pupils and sixth form students are acting as 'buddies' to younger ones.

34. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development takes due account of their religious beliefs and traditions, and engenders respect for the beliefs of others. Assemblies for the Islamic faith and for other religions are organised twice weekly for each year group. Two of the three assemblies observed during the inspection provided opportunities for reflection, and all met the statutory requirement of an act of collective worship. The form periods, however, did not. The college has a programme for form times but this does not

include, for example, a “thought for the day” or an act of collective worship. One Year 7 form period provided a good start to the college day, but in the sixth form many students were late and most of the time was spent checking the students’ work logs. Very few sixth-form students attended an assembly.

35. The development of the pupils’ cultural and multicultural awareness is good; it is well embedded in several areas of the curriculum, particularly in music, art, English, modern foreign languages, physical education and the humanities. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson, the pupils were learning how to chant and use body percussion in performing the Maori haka. A range of college trips provides opportunities for exploring aspects of British culture, such as the ‘young person’s parliament’ and the ‘Birmingham black history’ project. Aspects of the pupils’ personal development are addressed through lessons in citizenship.

36. The college is an orderly, calm community, with a good learning atmosphere in the great majority of classrooms. The pupils’ behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are good overall, although they are significantly influenced by the quality of teaching. Most pupils are keen to do well and want to meet their teachers’ expectations of them. The pupils respond very well to skilful, enthusiastic teaching, but remain passive when teaching is dull or when the teachers fail to involve them actively in the lesson. This was particularly the case with some of the quieter girls. Around the site the pupils behave sensibly and treat each other considerately.

37. The rate of attendance for 2002-03 was 90.1 per cent which is slightly below the median figure for all maintained secondary schools, and is consistent with the rates for the two previous years. Unauthorised absence has risen slightly to 0.9 per cent, but remains below the national figure. For the first half of this term, the attendance rate has been 92 per cent. The procedure of first-day contact with parents is well established and parents are contacted by letter when a pupil’s attendance becomes a cause for concern. Weekly displays show the attendance of each form and emphasise the importance of good attendance, making the link with higher attainment. The college has started to address the pupils’ punctuality to college more vigorously. Short lunchtime detentions, seen in action during the inspection, were used effectively as a deterrent.

Implementation of the action plan

38. Key Issue 1: enhance the capability of the governing body to ensure college development and improvement

The IEB and its constituent committees have met regularly since their inception. Members with particular responsibility for the key issues have spent time in college and report to the IEB regularly. The chair has worked closely with the headteacher to steer the process of development planning, with a view to returning the college to self-governance by 2005. Overall the IEB has achieved most of the goals set: particularly achieving stability and restoring staff morale; tackling key organisational issues, for example financial responsibilities; focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning; producing a three-year improvement plan; and preparing for the eventual restoration of governance. Progress on this key issue has been good.

39. Key Issue 2: ensure sufficient account is taken of the various ethnic backgrounds of the pupils

The college has responded well to the issues raised in the report of March 2002 and made good progress on this key issue. Excellent displays around the college enable pupils to celebrate the diversity of culture in the college. Individual departments are beginning to consider ways in which they can take account of the pupils' different needs in their day to day teaching; for example, in music, where staff have widened the range of music taught to include music from different cultures. The pupils have the opportunity to worship daily in Muslim and other faith assemblies. A home/college liaison officer works closely with families, especially mothers, to encourage them to support the college; for example, by organising a coach trip to Weston Super Mare aimed at mothers and daughters, and a successful fashion show. Small groups of pupils of African/Caribbean heritage visited Cambridge and Birmingham Universities in a bid to raise their aspirations and extend their horizons.

40. Key Issue 3: improve pupils' personal development, particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, behaviour and attitudes to learning

An active and committed working group of staff has led development on a whole-college policy for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Evidence in corridors, classrooms and in the pupils' demeanor points to the college's commitment to caring for its pupils and developing their self-esteem. The pupils' behaviour has markedly improved and the incidence of exclusion is continuing to fall. There is a developing culture for learning and the pupils have good attitudes to work. Good progress has been made on this key issue.

41. Key Issue 4: reduce the instances of unsatisfactory teaching and learning

At the time of the last inspection, the college had a high turnover of staff and there was considerable variation in the quality of teaching in most departments. The teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 was unsatisfactory, and in Years 12 and 13 it was satisfactory. The turnover of staff has now slowed and the college is fully staffed; new teachers have been readily assimilated into the college. The quality of teaching has improved and is now satisfactory overall. There are, however, weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics which the college needs to address.

The senior and middle managers have worked with LEA consultants to develop their skills in lesson observation. However, procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching remain insufficiently rigorous. Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

42. Key Issue 5: in the sixth form:

a) improve the results in public examinations

b) ensure the sixth form is cost effective

c) provide students with advice on the most appropriate course for them to follow

d) promote students' spiritual and cultural development

Overall, standards of attainment in the sixth form are rising but are still low in several subjects and many students have not achieved well enough to reach their targets. Minimum entry requirements have been established for advanced-level courses and the Year 11 pupils are given sound advice about which courses it would be appropriate for them to follow in the sixth form. The range of courses has been revised so that there is a better match of courses to the students' needs. A target minimum size has been established for Year 12 groups and flexible learning courses have been developed in some subjects where the class size fell below the minimum threshold. This has enabled the breadth of the curriculum to be maintained and takes into account the needs of the community. Collaborative arrangements with other institutions are being explored. However, Year 13 groups are small and there are no clear plans about how these courses can be sustained. Measures that have been taken since the previous inspection have improved cost-effectiveness but overall the sixth form is not cost-effective.

There are good opportunities for sixth-form students to develop a role in the wider aspects of college life by helping younger pupils; for example, with reading. The students can take part in a range of activities and visits to broaden their experience of other cultures. A programme of one-day 'morality conferences' has commenced. The weekly sixth-form assemblies are intended to engender an understanding and respect for other cultures. However, too few pupils attend these sessions and, overall, provision for the students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

Reasonable progress has been made on this key issue.

