

INSPECTION REPORT

WHALLEY RANGE HIGH SCHOOL

Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105558

Headteacher: Dame Jean Else

Reporting inspector: Mr I Thompson
12271

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 7th February 2003

Inspection number: 249777

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: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Female

School address: Wilbraham Road
Whalley Range
Manchester

Postcode: M16 8GW

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Debenham

Date of previous inspection: March 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| 12271 | I Thompson | Registered inspector | | Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 9504 | S Gurney | Lay inspector | | Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 19913 | R Garrett | Sixth form co-ordinator | | |
| 32208 | D Aitken | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages (11-16) | |
| 30749 | H Boyle | Team inspector | Geography (11-16) Sociology (sixth form) | |
| 18447 | R Cohen | Team inspector | History (11-16) Religious education (sixth form) | |
| 15163 | E Deeson | Team inspector | Information and communication technology | |
| 20716 | R Grogan | Team inspector | Religious education | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? |
| 1769 | M Holohan | Team inspector | Psychology (sixth form) Provision for students with special educational needs Citizenship | |
| 30518 | M Johnson | Team inspector | Art and design | |
| 15051 | L Kauffman | Team inspector | Design and technology (11-16) Health and social care (sixth form) Business studies (sixth form) Educational inclusion | |

| | | | | |
|------|----------|----------------|---------------|--|
| 4757 | D Morris | Team inspector | Music (11-16) | |
|------|----------|----------------|---------------|--|

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|---|-------------------------|
| 19056 | G Leech | Team inspector | English English language (sixth form) | |
| 7958 | G Lewis | Team inspector | Media studies (sixth form) | |
| 20189 | J Nagra | Team inspector | Urdu (11-16) The provision for and standards achieved by pupils with English as an additional language | |
| 2141 | J Oxley | Team inspector | Physical education (11-16) Sports science (sixth form) | |
| 3937 | J Seed | Team inspector | Science (11-16) Chemistry (sixth form) | |
| 22985 | J Sparkes | Team inspector | Biology (sixth form) | |
| 19596 | B Treacy | Team inspector | English literature (sixth form) Provision for students with English as an additional language | |
| 8341 | W Wimshurst | Team inspector | Mathematics | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whalley Range High School is a larger than average, 11-18 girls' comprehensive school serving an inner city area of south Manchester. The school has specialist status as a business and enterprise college. There are 1673 students on roll, of whom 306 are in the sixth form – which is larger than average. Students come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds but there are pockets of considerable deprivation in the school's catchment area. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Students are from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being Pakistani, White, Black African and Black Caribbean. Almost 200 students are refugees, mainly from Somalia. A well above average proportion of students is from homes where the first language is other than English and more than 200 are at an early stage of learning English. Students' standards when they join the school are well below average overall. The proportion of students on the school's register of special educational needs is about average but the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Need is below average. Most statements refer to specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) or moderate learning difficulties. The school is involved in a wide range of local and national initiatives, including Excellence in Cities, aimed at raising standards. The school has seen considerable change in recent years including a restructuring of the staff and improvements in accommodation. Numbers are now increasing and more parents wish to send their daughters to the school than there are places available.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many outstanding features. Teaching and learning are good. Students make good progress in all years and achieve well overall in relation to their standards when they join the school. Overall standards are below average but improving rapidly. Leadership is very strong and provides exceptionally clear educational direction. The school is very well managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership provides very clear direction. Procedures to ensure the quality of education and to manage improvement are very good.
- Standards are improving at a faster rate than nationally in Years 7-11.
- Good teaching leads to good learning so that students achieve well during their time in the school.
- There is very good careers and vocational education, very good provision for extra-curricular activities and outstandingly good links with the community that contribute a great deal to students' learning.
- The school provides high quality care and guidance for its students to ensure their progress. Links with parents are good.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Very effective support for students with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English enables them to make similar progress to their classmates.
- The school's very good climate for learning helps students to develop confidence in themselves.
- The school promotes students' moral, social and cultural development very well.

What could be improved

- Higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, are not consistently challenged sufficiently in some subjects.
- The library does not provide a satisfactory resource to support students' independent learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection in March 2000. The issues from the report have been tackled effectively. The quality of teaching has improved, standards have improved and the school has made good progress in all aspects of its work. The systems and structure put in place by the headteacher are coming together to provide a very good platform for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| GCSE examinations | D | E | C | A |
| A-levels/AS-levels | E | E | * | |

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

**National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.*

Overall, students do well during their time at the school and many do very well.

Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Students do at least as well as expected and the majority do well in relation to their standards when they join the school. Results in the 2002 national tests were below average overall but above average in relation to standards at the end of Year 6 and in comparison with the results of similar schools. Results have improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally over the last four years.

Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were average overall. Results were close to the school's targets. Students did very well in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Results were well above average in comparison with those of similar schools. Virtually all students who attended regularly gained a pass at grades A*-G, representing significant achievement for many students with statements of special educational need and for those whose home languages are other than English. Following a dip in 2001, there was a considerable improvement in 2002 because results improved in the great majority of subjects. Overall, results have improved at a faster rate than nationally over the last four years. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average but achievement is good in relation to students' earlier learning.

Students' examination performance was close to the school's demanding targets. The school's data show that in relation to their prior attainment, the majority of students did better, many much better, than might be expected. Current targets are challenging and based on detailed information about students' prior attainment.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are below average overall.

Provisional results at A level for 2002 show that the average points score per entry was similar to the previous year, but results in vocational courses were better. Overall students did as well as might be expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 11.

Standards are below average overall but achievement is good in relation to students' standards when they enter the sixth form.

Standards in work seen

| | Years 7-9 | Years 10 and 11 | Sixth form |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Well above average | | Religious education | |
| Above average | Dance, drama | Music, dance, drama, information and communication technology (ICT). | Biology, sociology, business studies, health and social care. |
| Average | Art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, ICT, music, religious education. | Art and design, citizenship, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education. | Mathematics, art and design, ICT, psychology, Urdu . |
| Below average | English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages, physical education. | English, mathematics, science, design and technology. | English, chemistry. media studies, religious education. |

Achievement (progress over time)

| | Years 7-9 | Years 10 and 11 | Sixth form |
|--------------|---|--|--|
| Very good | ICT | Religious education | Business studies, health and social care, psychology, sociology. |
| Good | English, mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education. | English, mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, physical education. | Mathematics, biology, chemistry, religious education, Urdu. |
| Satisfactory | Geography | Design and technology, geography. | English, art and design, ICT, media studies. |

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Attitudes are very good and students' enthusiasm contributes much to their learning. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good overall – very good in lessons so that little time is lost in managing behaviour. The rate of permanent exclusions is well below average; fixed period exclusions have been considerably reduced. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good relationships underpin very good personal development. The atmosphere of confidence and capability is a strength of the school. |

| | |
|------------|--|
| Attendance | Good attendance supports students' progress across the school. |
|------------|--|

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students: | Years 7 – 9 | Years 10 – 11 | Years 12 – 13 |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | Good | Good | 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.

Teaching is good and, as a result, students achieve well. It is good in English, mathematics and science. Some very good teaching was seen in almost all subjects and in Years 7-11; excellent teaching was seen in citizenship, dance, ICT, physical education, religious education and science. In the sixth form some excellent teaching was seen in health and social care and business studies; teaching was also very good overall in mathematics, psychology and sociology. Overall more than one lesson in five was very good or excellent and none was unsatisfactory.

The strengths of teaching come from the school's very good climate for learning. Teachers build upon very good relationships to manage classes well. They use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that meet students' needs and provide a range of activities to maintain interest and pace. Good individual support develops students' confidence and independence. Additional support is deployed well when available. In otherwise satisfactory lessons, the level of challenge for higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, is too often not high enough so that they are not stretched. Some teaching in the sixth form is presented in ways that do not build well enough on students' prior knowledge, or fail to involve all the students, or do not encourage independent learning. Very good attention is paid throughout the school to developing the skills of literacy and good attention is given to numeracy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good overall; very good range of opportunities in Year 10 and 11 as result of specialist status and EIC funding. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Strengths of the curriculum include the variety of choice to match students' needs in Years 10 and 11; the innovative approach to designing programmes for specific groups of students – for example the gifted and talented, funded through the Excellence in Cities initiative; additional courses provided in the sixth form to meet needs of students who join the school from elsewhere. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Very good provision enables students to make similarly good progress to their classmates. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | Very good. All students are supported very well to ensure that they achieve well. Most students who enter the school speaking little or no English make very good progress. The progress of a minority is affected by poor attendance despite the school's efforts. |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good overall. Very good provision for social development gives students confidence in themselves. Very good provision for moral development contributes much to students' very good attitudes. The school celebrates and values the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds. Provision for spiritual development is good. |
| How well the school cares for its students | The school provides very high quality care for its students that supports their progress very well. Monitoring of performance and well being are very good. Leadership and management of pastoral system are very strong. |
| How well the school works in partnership with parents | The school has formed an effective partnership with parents that supports students' progress well. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher provides exceptionally good leadership and vision to promote rising standards. Good management at all levels translates vision into action and supports improvement in all aspects of the school's work. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors support the school effectively. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses which helps them to hold the school to account for its performance. Governors set appropriately demanding targets for the school. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school has very good procedures to check how well it is doing and to take effective action to secure improvement. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good application and use of resources overall have contributed to a very effective climate for learning. The school applies principles of best value satisfactorily to all aspects of its work. |
| Staffing, accommodation and learning resources | There is a good match between staffing and the school's curriculum needs. Accommodation is of high quality overall and contributes significantly to the learning atmosphere of the school; accommodation for the sixth form does not meet its growing needs. The school has a good provision of resources for learning overall but the library is inadequate for the school's needs. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are pleased with the standard of education that the school provides. Teaching is good. Students are expected to work hard and make good progress. High quality of pastoral care. The range of extra-curricular activities. Parents are well informed about their children's progress. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents feel that the stringent rules for school uniform are too harshly applied. |

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They believe that the rules relating to uniform are reasonable and that the uniform contributes to students' pride in themselves and the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than in most schools nationally. It has substantially increased in size over the last four years. Currently there are 306 female students, 227 in Year 12 and 79 in Year 13. Although the proportion of students who continue after GCSE into the school's sixth form is well below average, most do continue their education in other sixth forms or further education establishments after GCSE. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and have English as an additional language; white students are under-represented because they tend to choose mixed-sex institutions for their sixth form education. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is very high compared with the average for all sixth forms nationally; 90 per cent of students qualify under the 'Excellence Challenge widening participation' scheme and receive an educational maintenance allowance. Also 69 per cent receive educational benefits. Generally, students begin the sixth form with below or well below average levels of attainment. Students can follow a range of subjects and courses at GCSE, GNVQ, AVCE, AS and A2 levels all of which have suitable requirements for entry. The sixth form is attracting increasing numbers, including students from other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Sixth form provision is good. The sixth form is cost-effective because standards are close to average, results are improving, students are achieving well overall and its costs are balanced by its income. There is a sufficient range of courses for students to make appropriate choices for study. The quality of care and guidance is very good. Teaching is good. The school's leadership is providing a clear direction for the sixth form's future, and existing provision is managed well.

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, and students learn well as a result.
- Students appreciate the good relationships between teachers and students, the way they are treated as young adults and the support they receive. They make considerable gains in confidence and maturity as a result.
- Leadership and management provide a clear sense of direction, a strong commitment to individual support and flexibility in meeting students' varied needs.

What could be improved

- Students' accommodation is not adequate to provide for the growth of the sixth form and does not match that of the rest of the school.
- Library provision, study facilities and other resources to support students' independent learning.

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.

| Subject area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|--|--|
| Mathematics | Very good. Standards are average. Students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. They do so because of the very good teaching they receive and their very positive attitudes to the course. |
| Chemistry | Good. Although standards are below average, students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good. The subject is led and managed effectively. Students' views of the course are very positive. |
| Biology | Good. Standards are above average because of good teaching. In relation to their standards at the start of the sixth form students achieve well. Their positive attitudes contribute to the good quality of learning and the good progress they make as they move through the sixth form. |
| Business studies | Very good. Students are attaining above average standards because of the dedication of the teaching team and the consistent approach to raising standards through students taking responsibility for their assessment and learning. |
| Information and communication technology | Satisfactory. Students are achieving as well as should be expected and approach average standards. Teaching is good. |
| Health and social care | Very good. Standards are above average. Students achieve very well because of the way teachers promote independent learning, make effective use of the community for work placements and challenge students to have the highest aspirations. |
| Art and design | Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and the small number of students achieves as well as should be expected. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future and is already bringing about improvements. |
| Media studies | Good. The course is led very well. Teaching is consistently good. Standards are below expectations, and though students are very involved and hard-working, the limited opportunities for practical media work constrain more rapid development. |
| Religious studies | Good. Although standards are below average, students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment as a result of good teaching and effective leadership and management of the subject. Students have good attitudes and respond well to the course. |
| Sociology | Very good. Students' very good attitudes to their course and very good teaching help them to learn well and attain above average standards. The subject is led very well, maintaining high expectations, and effectively managed. |
| Psychology | Very good. Students are achieving very well to attain standards in line with expectations. They do so because of their excellent attitudes to the course and the very good teaching they receive. Leadership and management are very good. |

| Subject area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|--------------|--|
| English | Satisfactory. Students following English courses are achieving as well as should be expected. Standards in English language are constrained by limited literacy skills, though students learn well in lessons and teaching is good. Teaching and learning in English literature are satisfactory. Standards of attainment are below average in both subjects. |
| Urdu | Good. Students achieve well as a result of their positive attitudes, the good teaching they receive and very good relationships between students and teacher. Standards are in line with expectations. The subject is led and managed effectively. |

In other subjects, work was sampled. In the lesson observed in community sports leadership, teaching was good and students were learning well as a result. Excellent teaching and learning took place in a lesson for students following the course leading to the qualification for classroom assistants. In lessons in religious education (GCSE) teaching was good and students were making good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| How well students are guided and supported | Very well. Teachers check students' progress closely and frequently. They provide very good support throughout the courses that enables students to achieve success. Students receive very good information and help about opportunities beyond school. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | Good. Leadership and management of the sixth form play an important part in students' good achievement. There is a strong focus on care for the individual while encouraging independence, and students appreciate both the sense of security the sixth form provides and the gains they make in self-confidence as a result. Teachers provide suitably challenging targets for improvement. Leadership provides clear direction and there is effective management of the sixth form provision. |

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"> • They appreciate the way in which the sixth form produces a harmonious multi-ethnic community. • They appreciate the good teaching and very good support for their learning which help them to achieve well. • They value the guidance they get about careers and higher education and the many opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities. • They feel that they are treated as young adults and encouraged to be independent and outward-looking. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inadequate common room space and cramped accommodation for study do not match facilities in the rest of the school. • The library has insufficient space and resources to meet students' needs. |

Because responses to the students' questionnaire (completed before the inspection) revealed several other areas of concern, students' views were canvassed extensively during the inspection. The results contradicted the questionnaire responses on every area of concern and students' views were almost entirely positive. Inspectors agree with students' views as expressed to them and included in the table above.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- The school has a very effective climate for learning in which students of all levels of attainment achieve well.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are improving at a faster rate than nationally.
- Students with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English are very well supported.
- Standards of literacy and numeracy are below average.

1. Although standards are below average overall, students of all levels of attainment do well at the school in relation to their earlier learning. Results in both national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are improving at a faster rate than nationally. Test results in 2002 were above average in comparison with results of similar schools and GCSE results were well above average. This improvement is built upon a number of factors that contribute to students' achievement and combine to create the atmosphere of confidence and capability in which they thrive.

2. The climate for learning that has been created in the school through the headteacher's vision, and the success of management in turning vision into reality, results in students coming willingly to school. The great majority are happy in the school and keen to learn so that their attendance is good. Their very good attitudes, enthusiasm and the very positive relationships among them and with their teachers contribute significantly to learning. The school's innovative curriculum arrangements play a significant part in motivating students particularly in Years 10 and 11. Enhanced by Excellence in Cities initiatives, its business and enterprise status and its extensive links with the community the school offers a range of opportunities to meet students' interests and aspirations so that they can achieve their potential.

3. Teaching is good overall and much of it is very good. Parents and students acknowledge the effectiveness of the way in which teachers build upon very good relationships to set high expectations of work and behaviour. Students' individual needs are met well throughout the school and teachers provide good support to promote achievement.

4. The school's pastoral system supports students very well. Despite the school's size, students are known as individuals; they are provided with a network of attachments and high standards of care that contribute to their personal development. Very good procedures for assessing students' progress ensure that students know clearly how well they are doing. The target setting process and regular progress reviews help them to understand what they need to do to improve.

5. Standards of literacy are below average and reflect the difficulties many students have with reading, writing and speaking English when they enter the school. These difficulties persist for many despite the very good support for students' various needs.

6. The overall standard of numeracy is below average. Many students do not handle numbers confidently when doing calculations in their heads. They too often want to resort to using a calculator for simple calculations. In science, students use measuring apparatus accurately and make good use of graphs to display results of experiments. In geography, students represent information confidently using a variety of graphs but often are not

accurate in interpreting them. In design and technology teachers emphasise the need for accuracy in measuring. As a result, students usually weigh and measure accurately.

7. The school has a significant number of students with a wide range of special educational needs. These include students with reading difficulties as well as specific learning difficulties such as hearing and speech impairment. It is a noteworthy feature of the school that all such students make very good progress against their learning and behaviour targets. Effective extra tuition is provided for students through well planned support in lessons, a system of paired reading and small group work in the Link Zone (a very successful support unit that works to improve retention of students who have behavioural difficulties or are at risk of exclusion and to manage their continued presence in the mainstream school). A significant factor in their progress is the way in which teachers plan effectively to ensure that all students have access to the curriculum. Access to the curriculum is also aided by the skill of the support staff and their well planned deployment. The culmination of this work is illustrated by the achievements of students at the end of Year 11, for example by the performance of students in the child care course last year when they were all able to go on into sixth form college.

8. Some 60 per cent of students throughout the school speak English as an additional language and this includes about 13 per cent who are at an early stage of language learning. The achievement of students who enter the school speaking little or no English is mostly very good. However, as might be expected, some do not reach the standards that are expected for their age. The progress of a minority of students is affected by poor attendance.

9. Students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students in the school. This reflects the success of the school's approach to dealing with students as individuals and there is now no clear link between ethnicity and any differences in attainment at either GCSE or Year 9 level. One significant reason for this is that the school uses data to identify where there is underperformance and remedies it by imaginative teaching and effective use of resources. The effect of this approach can be seen, for example, in the marked improvement in the proportion of students of African and Caribbean heritage obtaining grades A*-C in their GCSEs. Although the proportion of students of Somalian origin sitting national tests at the end of Year 9 is relatively small, the proportion of students gaining Level 5 in English has improved significantly over the past three years. There are good examples of students for whom English is an additional language, in all years, who can speak and write fluent English. Where students are at an early stage of language acquisition, many practise their speaking readily, and are not afraid to make mistakes when attempting new words and phrases. They are also confident in asking for help from their teachers and from other students. Most students are quick to acquire skills in handwriting and present their work neatly and carefully. In some lessons seen, students experience a degree of frustration because their understanding exceeds their ability to express themselves.

Sixth form

10. In 2001 the A/AS level average points score for students was well below average, but numbers were small in most subjects and national comparisons should therefore be treated with caution. Where comparisons can be made, students' performance was in line with national averages in biology, business studies, mathematics and sociology. Students did well in vocational courses in business, health and social care and ICT. Provisional results for 2002 show that the average points score per entry was similar to the previous year. Results in vocational subjects continued to be better. The previous inspection in 2000 recorded that results were improving but attainment was lower than nationally. The trend of results shows that standards at A2 level are being maintained (albeit at a relatively low level) and at AS level

the proportion of students obtaining at least a pass grade has improved by 30 per cent to 91 per cent in the last three years. Students have achieved at least satisfactorily given their well below average attainment on entry to the sixth form and many have done very well.

11. In work seen in this inspection, standards of attainment are close to average overall and achievement is good. The picture is one of rising standards and good improvement compared with previous years. Standards are above average in biology, business studies, health and social care and sociology, average in mathematics, ICT, art and design, psychology and Urdu, and below average in chemistry, media studies, religious studies and English. In all subjects, achievement is at least satisfactory and usually good in relation to students' prior attainment, and the very good achievement reported in business studies, health and social care and psychology reflects the consistently high quality of teaching in those subjects.

12. The standards of Year 12 students following key skills courses in communication are in line with expectations. The school's involvement in the Business and Enterprise initiative ensures that provision for students to re-take GCSE English and mathematics is available and that ICT skills are developed strongly. An 'ACCESS' course helps those who enter the sixth form with little or no English, and a 'Business and Enterprise Day' promotes communication, number and ICT as well as the wider key skills of working with others, study skills and problem solving. The latter are also covered in subject courses and teachers' attention to these contributes to students' achievement. However, in media studies and English courses students' standards of attainment are held back by limited literacy skills or lack of an appropriate vocabulary so that they have difficulty in gaining the higher grades in these subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- Students thrive at the school and feel privileged to be there.
- Most students have high expectations and a determination to succeed.
- Students bring very good attitudes to their learning. They work hard, concentrate and co-operate well.
- The school develops students' self confidence.
- Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities.

13. Students thrive at Whalley Range and feel privileged to be there. They learn self esteem early. They have confidence in themselves, have pride in their school and they 'walk tall'. A fine example was seen of five Year 7 students addressing their assembly clearly and with confidence. Students are courteous, friendly and unfailingly helpful to visitors. In lessons they work hard, concentrate and co-operate well. Students have high expectations and a determination to succeed. They are attentive and eager to learn. The vast majority respond well to the teaching though a few, often the lower attainers, are sometimes rather passive. Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities available. Almost all take part and enjoy at least one activity outside lessons.

14. Students with specific educational needs have very positive attitudes to learning. The high expectations of the staff, linked to the very positive atmosphere of the school, are successful in ensuring that students feel confident and willing to work hard. Those students with behavioural targets take them seriously and make genuine efforts to improve. Those students who require the support of the staff in the Link Zone derive great benefit from the friendly and supportive atmosphere. A consequence of all of this provision is the students' demonstrable progress in developing self-esteem and self confidence.

15. Students' behaviour is good and in lessons is often very good. Last year there was a high number of fixed period exclusions but this is justified by the good general standard of behaviour and the school's determination to maintain it. Since September there has only been one permanent exclusion, which is well below the national average, and the number of fixed period exclusions has been considerably reduced. There are occasional instances of bullying. This was not raised as an issue during the inspection and parents felt that most cases were dealt with well. The only questionnaire respondent to comment on bullying praised how well the school resolved the problem. The racial harmony at Whalley Range is impressive and students show great respect for each other's feelings and beliefs. Students' relationships, both with their teachers and with each other, are very good. They engage actively in class discussions and are able to debate and challenge others whilst respecting their views.

16. Levels of personal development are very good. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and show initiative. From Year 7, students are chosen to become form prefects, games captains or school councillors and can apply to train as peer mediators. This is a service which students find helpful and is used well. Year 8 students gain work experience by helping with reception duties and their "buddy system" is valued by new entrants. Students are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and raise money for a range of national and local charities. The new Range Stadium gives students every incentive to participate actively in a range of sports. Older students can work towards Educational Business Partnership awards which cover their attendance, community service, challenge and work experience. Last year 22 students achieved the platinum award which made Whalley Range the most successful of Manchester's competing schools. Students also have opportunities to show initiative in the wider community by serving on Manchester Young People's Council. A good example of initiative was when a small group of sixth formers, some of whom had never been away from home before, went by train to attend a student conference in Nottingham. Teachers show a level of trust in students' initiative and responsibility which encourages high aspirations. As one parent put it, "This is a 'never say no' school".

17. Attendance last year was good and well above the national average. So far this year it is a little lower though still good and makes an important contribution to the continuity of students' progress. Most students arrive punctually to school. There is some time slippage between lessons but some of this is inevitable due to the distance between some classrooms.

Sixth form

18. Sixth form students have very good attitudes overall and want to achieve well. They appreciate the good teaching and the very good support they receive. Students in business studies, health and social care and psychology are particularly well motivated in lessons and show excellent commitment and effort. In other subjects attitudes in lessons are usually at least good.

19. Students' personal development and relationships are very good. Teachers provide opportunities for developing independent learning, study skills and working together, and relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves are supportive and friendly. These features were particularly notable among students learning Urdu, and art and design students appreciated their teachers' willingness to give up their free time to help with work. Many students commented on the way the sixth form had improved their confidence and raised both their attainment and their aspirations. One student who had missed an opportunity to speak about this in a formal meeting caught up with an inspector later to express her appreciation of what the sixth form had done for her. Students can and

do involve themselves in the school council, in voluntary work and in 'peer mediation', for instance acting as 'anti-bullying' counsellors for younger students.

20. Attendance is good. Teachers check attendance regularly, but the fact that absence is low speaks well for the way students take responsibility for their learning and reinforces the positive judgement about their attitudes.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- Teaching and learning are good overall in all years and, as a result, students make good progress.
- Teachers plan lessons well to meet students' individual needs.
- Classroom management is very good so that lesson time is used to the full.
- Excellent systems of assessment ensure that teachers have a thorough knowledge of students' special educational needs.
- Students are supported well in their learning by teachers and support staff.
- Higher attaining and gifted and talented students are not consistently challenged sufficiently.

21. Teaching is good overall in all years and, as a result, students make good progress. Some good teaching was seen in all subjects during the inspection and some very good teaching in most. Examples of outstandingly good teaching were seen in citizenship, dance, ICT, physical education, religious education and science. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection reflects the effort put into teachers' professional development by all levels of management through evaluating classroom standards and setting targets for improvement. The effectiveness of teaching can be seen in the rapid improvements in standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE results.

22. Among many strengths, what really stands out in this school is the way that teachers build students' confidence. A very good Year 7 citizenship lesson illustrated all that is best in teaching. First and foremost, the lesson was prepared well to take account of the wide range of individual needs in the class which contained, for example, students who were high attainers, students with special educational needs and some at an early stage of learning English. The teacher's lively enthusiasm motivated the class from the start. Carefully chosen questions and speaking activities enabled all to make a contribution. The timing of changes in activity to maintain pace and interest was immaculate. Throughout the lesson, the diversity of students' ethnic backgrounds was celebrated while emphasising common purpose through the use of positive images. The atmosphere created by the teacher gave all students – no matter at what stage of linguistic competence - the confidence to speak for themselves while they worked as a class, individually or in groups. Above all, they enjoyed themselves and, as a result, brought very good attitudes to their work and made very good progress.

23. One area of teaching, although satisfactory, could be made better with relative ease. Gifted and talented students make similarly good progress to their classmates overall because most teachers plan to meet their needs and the school provides alternative curricular arrangement in Years 10 and 11 with additional enrichment activities beyond lesson times. For example, individual needs are met well in English, drama and physical education. Nevertheless, across the school gifted and talented students and higher attainers are not consistently challenged sufficiently to reach their full potential. In science, for example they are not provided with sufficient extension activities or opportunities to use higher skill levels; in mathematics, although extension activities are planned and provided, they do not always present a high enough level of challenge.

24. The majority of the teaching of students with special educational needs takes place in mainstream lessons alongside their fellow students. Excellent systems of assessment, combined with precisely targeted individual education plans, ensure that all teachers have a thorough knowledge of their students. Teaching is consequently focused well on their specific learning needs. An example of this was in a Year 9 English lesson on Macbeth where the teacher set a range of carefully graduated tasks and through the use of careful questioning was able to ensure that all students benefited from the lesson. Support staff play an important role in students' learning. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, the effective use of two members of the support staff ensured that students were able to ask specific questions. The skill of the support staff enables students to access all areas of the curriculum. An interesting element of the teaching is where students support each other in a paired reading exercise. The Open House project, which takes place out of lesson time, provides valuable extra tuition for students who need extra help with their learning. The work of the Link Zone is also an important feature in ensuring that students who have behavioural difficulties or are at risk of exclusion are provided with a supportive learning atmosphere more suited to their needs. A visit to the Link Zone showed well structured teaching which provides an environment in which students can learn effectively whilst also working towards a resolution of their behavioural difficulties.

25. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning provided for students who have English as an additional language is very good. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge not only of English but of other languages, particularly from the Indian sub-continent and Somalia. This enables them to make an accurate assessment of the capabilities of students when they arrive in the school and to speak to many students in their own first language, though teachers exercise judgement as to the extent to which they do this. All lessons seen had clearly defined objectives and these were explained to students when the lesson started, with the result that students knew what they were attempting to achieve and had a sense of purpose. A great deal of variety is introduced into lessons. Students work in pairs, as part of a larger group, or by themselves; they repeat words until they can pronounce them correctly; they chant phrases out loud together until they can use them confidently and they have to overcome their reticence and read to, or address, the whole class. Good opportunities are provided for students to read and write. Teachers constantly remind students to use dictionaries and other reference books and this, in turn, encourages them to use their own initiative. The quality of marking is very good. Teachers pay close attention to accuracy at the word and sentence level and also provide students with targets for improvement. The pace of lessons is brisk but teachers are always sensitive to the needs and responses of individuals and are quick to give additional support where it is needed. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and this helps create a pleasant atmosphere in which learning takes place. On the limited number of occasions when teaching was relatively less effective, teachers missed opportunities to develop students' skills in writing.

Sixth form

26. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and a high proportion was good or better. This is an improvement compared with the previous inspection. Some excellent teaching was observed in health and social care and business studies. Teaching was very good in mathematics, psychology and sociology.

27. A strong feature of the good teaching is teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They use these effectively to guide students' learning. This is apparent in mathematics, for example, where teachers show very good knowledge in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. They explain clearly so that students understand new skills and concepts. It is also the case in biology, where teachers' very good subject

knowledge enables them to give clear explanations of facts and promote the confidence of the students. They display an enthusiasm for the subject, which is passed on to the students. Similar subject expertise benefits students in health and social care, where teachers' passion for the subject and well-researched and up-to-date personal expertise contribute greatly to students' knowledge and understanding. In psychology, teachers' very good subject knowledge enables students to develop mature and informed responses.

28. Teachers combine their good subject knowledge with well-planned lessons and a variety of activities that effectively meet the needs of their students and particularly encourage independent learning. In biology, for example, the setting of mini research projects, the results of which the students subsequently report to their peers, fosters independent learning skills. In chemistry, much effective use is made of previous examination questions in successfully developing examination techniques. The use of personal action planning in business studies is a further technique that enables students to become independent, self-motivating learners. In ICT it is common for teachers to use a range of activities and resources including growing use of the school's studios and outside organisations. Students in health and social care use role-play to investigate the way groups work. In the best religious studies lessons, teachers are very adept at using a range of strategies to draw out significant points from material that is both challenging and exciting. They successfully exhort students to become more active participants in their own learning. In English there is a good variety of activities, including those that involve students in contributing to discussion or preparing presentations, and students of Urdu get opportunities to discuss issues related to their study and are challenged appropriately.

29. These attributes of good teaching are reinforced by good relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves. As a result most students have good attitudes to their work and achieve well. Students in psychology, Urdu, mathematics, sociology, religious studies, media studies, health and social care, chemistry, biology and business studies are particularly keenly motivated in lessons and show excellent concentration, effort and pride in their work. Often such students are further motivated to continue their studies. In other subjects attitudes are usually at least good.

30. Teaching is not so effective when occasionally teachers do not always target questioning sufficiently to draw out information and check understanding. In some lessons, teachers tend to lecture and use a style that is too academic so that students are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. The occasional less successful lesson lacked pace and interest and there were few opportunities for student involvement. Sometimes a greater variety of methods to build progressively on students' knowledge would give them confidence to undertake more demanding tasks. These occasions are, however, rare. Other significant obstacles to effective teaching arise from accommodation and resource issues in such subjects as psychology, religious studies, media studies, art and design, health and social care, and chemistry. Restricted access to ICT also reduces opportunities for independent learning in some subjects, including ICT itself.

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

- The school curriculum meets students' needs well because it is broad, flexible and innovative in design.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Provision for students with English as an additional language is very good.
- Arrangements for improving standards of literacy are very good. Strategies for improving numeracy are good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.

- Careers and vocational education are very good.
- The school benefits from outstandingly good links with the community.
- The school makes very good arrangements for students' personal development.

31. The school provides a good quality curriculum that is broad, balanced and innovative in design, catering for the needs of different groups of students and including a wide range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Academic leaders are involved in review of the curriculum to improve the courses on offer to students. The school has anticipated the government's proposed changes to the 14-19 curriculum by providing half the students in Year 10 with alternatives to studying a modern foreign language and design and technology.

32. The quality and range of the curriculum in Years 7-9 is good, including all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. In addition, all students take dance and drama. The higher attaining groups in French study German as well from Year 8. More students could benefit from this opportunity. Personal and social education has been subsumed under citizenship and is not separately timetabled in Years 8 and 9. Instead, the school has organised an ambitious programme of business, citizenship and review days each half term for the whole school. These days involve the community and specialist agencies working alongside teachers to teach these programmes. It is an exciting venture but will need close monitoring to ensure that students receive their full entitlement to the various strands of the personal development curriculum.

33. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is designed well to cater for four different cohorts of students, identified over a long process of consultation. It offers a full academic programme for students expected to achieve five or more higher grades at GCSE, including the chance for gifted and talented students to take an AS level in critical thinking. Half the students are offered vocational courses in one of five occupational areas at either foundation or intermediate levels, in addition to their GCSE studies in the core subjects. These courses are popular, particularly business studies and health and social care. Flexibility has been gained by waiving the requirement in Year 10 that all students should take a modern foreign language and design and technology. Students make their choices after receiving clear guidance from their teachers. Some choices are directed, such as the requirement that all students study for an ICT qualification. The school is looking to increase the choice of AS level courses on offer to gifted and talented students, and to provide more work related opportunities for a small number of students who need an alternative curriculum.

34. The school is highly creative in the curricular arrangements it makes for the many initiatives it takes on board. Its new status as a Business Enterprise College is being developed along with citizenship through the business and citizenship days each half term and by promoting entrepreneurial skills, problem solving and independent learning across the curriculum. Accommodating these new courses in Years 10 and 11 has created some uncertainty about the position of religious education in the curriculum. As a result, students are now being prepared to take the GCSE short course examination at the end of Year 10.

35. The school makes very good provision for students with special educational needs. The commitment of the subject staff is well supported by a significant number of specialist support staff. Extra tuition in reading further supports well structured teaching in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy provided in subject lessons.

36. Provision of opportunities for the development of self esteem and a wide range of social skills is a feature of the school. Further enrichment of the curriculum is provided for students with special educational needs. Staff in the Link Zone provide students with experiences such as residential visits, trips to the theatre and outdoor activities such as visits to an army assault course. Significant attention is paid to the moral aspect of students'

development. A major element of this provision is the very strong relationships between staff and students in which all students feel valued and respected.

37. The curriculum provision for students with English as an additional language is very good. The school's arrangements enable students to make rapid progress and help them become part of the school community. What is taught is based upon a careful assessment of the students' prior attainment and is reviewed in the light of their progress. When students are in the early stages of learning English, topics are designed so as to encourage students to be active in their learning. Students are given the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular activities, which also help to promote their learning and social confidence. For example, students are able to attend "open house", which is held every lunchtime. Teachers and support staff are available throughout the session and provide general help and guidance on such matters as school routine and homework. Students can talk together and play games such as chess. The learning support department also provides additional after-school lessons for students in Years 9 and 10. Teachers identify which students will benefit from these classes using assessment data.

38. Careers education has received a boost with the advent of the Business Enterprise College status, which has put careers across the curriculum. Provision is now very good. Departments are being approached on a rolling programme to develop the vocational aspects of their subjects for students and to cultivate the key skills of an enterprise culture. Geography has already identified its contribution in its schemes of work. Careers lessons in Years 7 and 9 serve to raise students' aspirations by involving successful women from business and the professions. Year 10 careers lessons assist students to understand their personal qualities and link them to possible careers. Students have two weeks' work experience in Year 10, most finding their own placements, which provides a very beneficial experience of the world of work. A further block of careers lessons prepares them for the choices ahead of them post-16. The school's careers adviser interviews all students in Year 11 and the process for guiding students onto post-16 courses is well organised between the head of careers and the pastoral team. The fact that half the students are studying vocational courses means that they receive extra careers information and guidance in their occupational area.

39. The school makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities, seeing them as opportunities for active citizenship and expecting all students to take part. Many do and the school remains busy for the hour following the end of lessons. For example, nearly a third of students are involved in extra sports activities at some point during the week. The published list of activities is extensive, representing most areas of the curriculum, with strong contributions from the performing arts of dance, drama and music. Open House and Link Zone provide valuable learning and pastoral support to students with special educational needs. Similarly, many subjects provide help with homework and revision outside lessons. Young Enterprise provides opportunities for students to run a small business. Citizenship features in activities provided by the pastoral system, such as peer counselling, year councils, charity fund-raising and the debating society. The school's own radio and television stations give opportunities for students to learn the skills of broadcasting. In addition, the school organises a variety of trips, including residential visits to France and Germany.

40. The school makes very good provision for the teaching of literacy. A comprehensive policy statement ensures that development of literacy skills is embedded in all aspects of all students' work. Subjects and departments are required to take account of literacy in schemes of work and teachers' planning, the English department implements the literacy strategy in Years 7 and 8, the 'Raising Individual Achievement' and 'Open House' teams promote literacy development and support individual students, and supportive connections exist with outside agencies. Since the previous HMI inspection in 2000, planning and training

have been up-dated to include training in the literacy strategies, intervention strategies for students at level 3 or below in English, development of the three or four part lesson and an active working group for developing key skills. There has been a special emphasis on students with English as an additional language.

41. The effects of this can be seen in good practice observed in religious education, for example, where students are encouraged to take part in discussions, role-play and improvisation, key vocabulary is taught and used, and students develop a variety of writing styles including good essay writing techniques. In art and design, key words are displayed, students' sketchbooks are annotated well, and students are encouraged to research art history and cultural information and to evaluate their work. In design and technology, use of the whiteboard for a 'spelling bee' and of a 'writing frame' for diary writing enable students to develop their literacy skills effectively. The department gives very good emphasis to the meaning, learning and use of essential technical words. In ICT, literacy development is explicit in all schemes of work and key words are on display in some rooms. The subject plans to introduce literacy homework. Overall, contributions of subjects to the development of students' literacy skills are good.

42. The effectiveness of the contribution made by subjects across the school to developing students' numeracy is good. Teachers have been made aware of the new numeracy strategy. The school's policy statement to guide the development of numeracy skills is referred to in subject documentation. As a result, most subjects are making an effective contribution to improving standards as students move through the school. Good contributions are being made in science, physical education and design and technology where measuring skills are being reinforced well. In some subjects teachers do not allow for students' numeracy levels in the tasks set. For example, in a Year 8 ICT lesson, the tasks given did not take account of the range of attainment within the class.

43. The school has an innovative approach to personal, social and health education. It is mainly taught in citizenship with a cross-curricular approach through religious education, assemblies and other relevant areas. Half-termly business, citizenship and review days fill the gaps not otherwise covered, such as sex education and attention to misuse of drugs. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Provision is good though it is still in a developmental stage. It will be under constant review to ensure its relevance.

44. The school has very extensive links with the community that contribute significantly to the opportunities that the school provides for its students. These have been greatly enhanced by the school's Business and Enterprise College status and through Excellence in Cities. Funds from the latter help to provide mentors and a counsellor for students. The Business and Enterprise College has a board which includes its main sponsors. Members monitor the school's initiatives and value for money. The specialist college status has reciprocal benefits. The school is helping to take educational projects to the wider community. One of the aims is to show people how to open up business opportunities. In return, the school has received funding to enhance the school's facilities and resources. Entrepreneurship is encouraged within the school and students are already getting an important insight into the world of commerce by running three small businesses – a stationery shop, a book shop and the school newspaper. The new Range Stadium funded by Vida Football, the Greater Manchester Youth Basketball Club and the DfES has resulted in huge benefits both to the school and the community at large. Sporting links are many and varied and help to raise students' sporting aspirations. The English National Basketball Association is holding its national finals at the Stadium and the world wheelchair basketball championships are also being held on site. Manchester City's Academy is based at the school and this brings about 140 youngsters to the school most weekends. Links with partner institutions are also of great benefit. Students visit and work with the local universities and the school hosts students in

training. A local cluster of two secondary schools and four primaries all work together to share facilities and expertise. For example, one of the primary schools has joined with Whalley Range to make a video about sharing best practice in mathematics. Many other wide ranging and varied links enhance the quality of students' education. Whalley Range is an outward looking, racially harmonious school which is held in high regard by the local community.

45. The school makes very good provision for the personal development of its students, overall. Spiritual education is good, the main contribution coming from religious education, where teachers help students to see the relevance of different beliefs for their own lives and to reflect on some of life's ultimate questions about meaning and purpose. Spiritual reflection is promoted in assemblies, using music provided by choirs and bands, and a closing prayer around the theme. The school's television station broadcasts a daily 'Thought for the Day', which is well produced and provides a time of reflection in which the whole school can join. The emphasis of the business enterprise college is on raising students' confidence in themselves and their respect for others, creating an ethos in which all students can flourish.

46. The moral education of students is very good. Assemblies and 'Thought for the Day' broadcasts during inspection week communicated effectively the school's values regarding striving for excellence, tolerance and respect for diversity, using one's talents for the benefit others and showing practical concern for those in need. These are reinforced in the messages contained in the attractive displays around the school. High expectations regarding conduct are clearly stated in home-school contracts and the code of 'Expectations of young women'. The harmonious relationships among the diverse ethnic groups testify to the moral strength of the school community. Students have many opportunities to discuss moral issues in lessons, for example, conservation in design and technology, the evils of the slave trade in history, and modern forms of prejudice and discrimination in religious education. Citizenship courses also have a strong moral content, celebrating the cultural identity of all students in the Year 7 lessons on the Commonwealth. Teachers are good role models and the high level of attention to individual needs shown by support staff gives students a clear message about caring for people.

47. Students receive very good social education. The school creates a strong sense of community through its caring relationships, attractive environment and corporate image, formed with the help of Range Radio and Television. Students have a real sense of belonging and take a pride in their school. The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities is presented as opportunities for active citizenship and many students are involved. These include the chance to train as peer counsellors to other students. Students have a voice in the school's affairs through their representatives on year and school councils. Elections to them are run on the same lines as local elections, giving students a good understanding of the democratic process. Council representatives are very constructive in the proposals they put forward. The Police Forum gives students a valuable opportunity to raise matters of concern to the local community. There are many opportunities for students to take part in fund-raising for charity, a recent project being the collection and despatch of stationery to schools in Afghanistan. Social skills are well developed through group work in many subjects and on the vocational courses, where they are particularly well developed in health and social care. Business enterprise status has created many links with the wider community, which are enhancing the preparation of students for the world of work.

48. Provision for students' cultural development is very good. The rich mix of cultures among the students is a valuable resource, which the school uses well, drawing on the experience of students to enhance lessons in many subjects. For example, the considerable multicultural awareness of students is used to inform their response to literature and drama, their appreciation of celebration meals in food technology, and their understanding of religious practices in religious education. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good in art and design, music, dance and drama, and the school is involved in a number of projects with art galleries, theatres and various art groups. The school provided the venue for the launch of the Arts Council's Creative Partnership, which offers added input to its cultural activities. Rehearsals are in progress for the school production of 'Return to the Forbidden Planet'. There is a wide programme of trips and visits to broaden students' cultural horizons, including the modern language residential visits to France and Germany.

Sixth form

49. The sixth form provides a suitable range of academic and vocational courses for students. The vocational courses in information technology, business education and health and social care are popular and meet students' needs and local circumstances well, and are particularly suitable in relation to the school's business and enterprise status. Satisfactory provision for key skills is made through GNVQ, ACCESS, other subject courses and through the business and enterprise initiative.

50. Other provision to enrich students' sixth form experience is good overall. Students particularly appreciate the challenges of work within the local community, the opportunities to take part in 'peer mediation' and the School Council, to develop 'critical thinking', to visit local universities and industries, and, where relevant to their courses, visit theatres, broadcasting studios and art galleries. Outward Bound courses, a youth club and Royal Navy training are other opportunities open to students. At present, however, the school only offers religious education to a very small cohort of students. One Year 12 GCSE group is pursuing a 'fast track' 5 GCSE one-year course, in which religious education is one of the five subjects. The other group of students, also in Year 12, follows an AS level course in religious studies. There is no provision for other students in the sixth form. The school, therefore, does not fulfil its statutory duty in respect of religious education provision in the sixth form.

51. Students are very effectively prepared for work and higher education through the citizenship tutorial programme, a wide variety of careers advice both locally and in school, residential and other work experience, visits to universities, and maintenance of their own progress files. Students acknowledge and appreciate the support they receive in these respects. Their aspirations have been raised significantly as a result.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- Pastoral care is very good.
- Child protection procedures are good.
- Teachers make students feel valued and able to learn with confidence.
- The school takes great care to provide for students' special educational needs.
- Attendance is very well monitored.
- Procedures to promote good behaviour are very good.
- Procedures for assessing students' attainment are very good.
- Procedures for monitoring and supporting student's progress are very good.

52. The school makes very good provision for the care and welfare of its students. Pastoral care is very good. Teachers and classroom assistants know their students well and show care and dedication to their individual needs. They encourage students to aim high both in their work and through extra-curricular activities. Teachers make students feel valued and able to learn with confidence. Personal development leaders, the school nurse and a counsellor are all available to offer valuable professional help and guidance.

53. There are excellent systems for the assessment of the needs of students with special educational needs and the provision of individual learning plans. Significant features of the system are the care taken to identify students' needs and the involvement of the students themselves in the establishment and review of targets. Closely targeted behaviour plans have also been developed. All subject departments are made aware of students' learning and behaviour plans and incorporate them into their planning. This information forms an important element in teaching that is focused well on the students' special educational needs. Apart from the success of the formal systems, it is also important to mention the strength of the relationships which support the provision. The friendly and supportive atmosphere of the Open House and the Link Zone are important elements in ensuring the development of students' self confidence and esteem.

54. There are very good arrangements to welcome students into Year 7. Year 6 children have the opportunity to spend time in the high school, to meet their teachers and fellow students. Where students have experienced, or are likely to experience problems, teachers from Whalley Range make home visits. Great care is taken over children with special educational needs. Children from a variety of backgrounds and cultures are helped to settle in quickly and easily.

55. Procedures to ensure child protection are good and much time and effort is put into promoting students' welfare. There is good first aid provision and very secure health and safety procedures. Regular risk assessment takes place. No risks to health or safety were apparent during the inspection.

56. Attendance is very well monitored. Up-to-date statistics on attendance and punctuality are posted in the corridor and students are given excellent incentives to achieve one hundred per cent attendance. The school contacts the homes of students with unexplained absence on the first morning of absence. Students who have been very poor attenders may attend full time in the Link Zone enabling them to continue their studies more confidently in a protected environment. Classes where attendance and punctuality are good are praised in assemblies. Similarly, the poorest classes are identified on the school notice board.

57. Procedures to promote good behaviour are very good. Classroom management is very good and much work goes into retaining the most challenging students in school. The school has appointed its own education welfare officer and home/school liaison officer. Their contribution to pastoral care, together with help from the Link Zone staff, has helped considerably to reduce the numbers of excluded students. The few instances of bullying are well resolved. Assemblies, religious education, citizenship and the whole ethos of the school ensure bullying is kept to a minimum. The school has excellent procedures for promoting racial harmony.

58. The procedures for assessing students' attainment are very good. The assessment policy provides clear guidelines for assessment that result in a consistent approach across the school. Year 6 national test results, and other nationally approved means of testing, are combined to build up a clear picture of students' attainment when they arrive at the school. This information is collated and made available to teachers so that they know the standards of the students they are teaching. Targets are set for students, they are reviewed regularly

and students' progress towards their targets is clearly monitored. The process is well known by students. Most subjects have at least good procedures in place to assess students against national standards. In some, for example science, physical education and design technology very good systems are in place that help students improve their standards.

59. The procedures for monitoring and supporting student's progress are very good. The school has a very good system for reviewing and checking progress. All teachers are involved in the process and the results are used very well to set targets for students. The results are regularly discussed with students so that they know what they have to do to improve their standards and reach their targets. The results are being used effectively by most subjects to inform how they plan their work. For example, in science the information is used very well to place students into groups, provide different courses and to set realistic targets for students. In English it is being used well to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching.

Sixth form

Assessment

60. The use of assessment to promote students' learning is good. The school guides students in their choice of courses so that there is a good match between courses and students' aspirations and potential. Students have a 'Review Day' which gives students a minimum target grade to help them achieve well and know what is expected of them. Students' progress is checked and monitored regularly. Teachers' assessments too are helpful, both in relation to marking of essays or assignments and to feedback given to students in lessons. Teachers are good at diagnosing individual learning needs and provide for them well. Reports give good information about students' progress.

Advice, support and guidance

61. The advice, support and guidance given to students in the sixth form are very good. There is a strong focus on care for the individual and flexibility in meeting students' needs. Individual interviews take place before joining the sixth form, tutors have a special role in picking up less confident students, there are regular progress reviews, and students have very good advice about careers and higher education opportunities. Teachers are approachable and helpful, particularly in relation to giving up their own time to provide extra help. Students value the support they receive very highly.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- Parents are very pleased with the school's educational provision
- Information about progress is very good.
- The special educational needs staff, the staff of the Link Zone and the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Team (EMAT) have established very good links with parents.

62. Parents are rightly very pleased with the school's educational provision. They say their children like the school. They think the teaching is good and pastoral care is of high quality. They like the way students are made to work hard and are pleased by the progress they make. Just a few parents criticise the stringent rules for school uniform, which they consider to be too harshly applied. The new home/school liaison officer is very effective at promoting positive links with parents and improving relations with the few disaffected parents.

63. Parents and carers are given very good quality information about their children's progress and school events. Students' reports are detailed and set targets for improvement. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are both informative and

helpful. Parents' consultation evenings give parents the opportunity to discuss their children's progress personally with form tutors and subject teachers. These are very well attended. 'Partnership News' is a very readable and interesting newsletter which is sent out every half term. Many other letters are sent out and parents praise the speed at which concerns are followed up.

64. Most parents support their children's education well and encourage them to take part in extra-curricular activities. The school has run literacy courses for Asian mothers to help them help their children. Journals are generally well used as a method of communication. There is no parent/teacher association but school productions and sporting fixtures are very well attended. The Business and Enterprise status is also beginning to enhance the school's links with parents, which have been steadily improving and are now good.

65. The special educational needs staff, the staff of the Link Zone and EMAT staff have successfully established very good links with parents. The co-operative nature of their work with students gives parents confidence in their work and a willingness to discuss problems and approaches. Issues raised by parents are handled sensitively and effectively. The school provides more formal links for parents through courses in subjects such as literacy and parenting skills.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The headteacher provides outstandingly good leadership.
- The senior management team work well together to translate vision into action and secure improvement.
- The staff share a common sense of purpose and the school has a very good climate for learning as a result.
- The governing body supports the school well.
- The school makes effective use of its resources to manage improvement.
- The library is too small for the school's needs.
- The quality of accommodation for the sixth form needs improvement because it does not provide as well as the rest of the school for students' needs.

66. Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher combines creative energy, clarity of thought and an innovative overview of educational development to provide exceptionally clear direction for the school's development. Her great strength is in identifying what needs doing to manage improvement and finding people who can drive it. Consequently, she has assembled a senior management team that brings a wide range of expertise and a great deal of enthusiasm to help shape the vision and support her in translating it into reality. The strength of the senior management team lies in the way that individual expertise is harnessed to drive all aspects of the school's work while providing strong support for colleagues. Above all, a self-critical management culture has been established in which continuous review and feedback are leading to sustained improvement. The overall effect is that very strong leadership is supported by very good management. All efforts are focused on promoting students' pride in the school and improving its effectiveness to match its claim to be the 'home of excellence'. The school's aims and values are fully reflected in all its work. A common sense of purpose pervades the school so that all staff, teaching and non-teaching, contribute to the school's effectiveness. For example, the efficient administrative team plays a key role in the smooth running of the school, the site staff ensure that the buildings provide a pleasant place to work and the reprographics section provides high quality support for both academic and pastoral staff.

67. Performance management has been organised very capably. Appropriate targets are set and time is allocated to team leaders to observe and evaluate teaching in their departments. Professional development is part of the process and is incorporated into the well-planned in-service training programme. There is an excellent and successful induction scheme for supporting newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. The administrative, caretaking, dining and supervisory staff all contribute to the school's ethos through their support and cheerfulness to students and visitors.

68. The school makes excellent use of new technology to serve its purpose. Very effective communication is a key factor in the management of the school. At the most basic level, a daily 'hymn' sheet keeps everyone in touch with day-to-day matters. Well thought out, clearly expressed and excellently organised policy documents cover all aspects of the school's work. High quality posters and charts around the school reinforce the primary messages of pride and achievement. Every opportunity is taken to promote the school. Range Radio, Range TV, the school's website and even the holding message on the telephone system all contribute to the school's armoury of communication systems to get its message across to students and the wider community.

69. The governing body supports the school well and acts as a good check on the school's performance. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's working through frequent reviews, presentations and personal contacts. The chair of governors, in particular, spends much time in the school. She is very much part of the school's management, often attending senior management meetings, and has taken the opportunity to see the school from the students' viewpoint by following a GCSE course.

70. During the course of the inspection, people outside the school made some representations to the team regarding financial administration. These were not followed up because it is not part of the inspection to conduct a detailed audit of the school's finances. The school reports that it has acted upon the recommendations of the last auditor's report and the evidence of this inspection is that the school uses its finances very well to support its development and to raise standards.

71. Additional income is generated in a number of ways to benefit the school. For example, extra funds are received from fans of the local football club who use the large secure car park. The reprographics section produces products for other outside organisations on a commercial basis. Overall, the school receives an above average amount of funds, which is testimony to a successful approach to running the school as an entrepreneurial business with a strong corporate identity, in keeping with its specialist business and enterprise status. Given that standards are rising rapidly as a result of good teaching, that the leadership group provides opportunities for initiative and personal development for teachers at all levels, that students develop in confidence as they move through the school, that the school is very well managed and that no educational aspect of its work is unsatisfactory, the school provides good value for money.

72. The work of all teachers and support staff involved in working with students who have English as an additional language, those who have special educational needs and learning mentoring are all co-ordinated and managed very well. Those involved in managing the service meet frequently to review its effectiveness and to ensure that resources are targeted appropriately. The consequence is that a high quality, responsive level of support is provided for students with a variety of needs.

73. Special educational needs provision is very well managed. Efficient use of staff and other resources through careful planning results in students receiving maximum benefit from them. Leadership is imaginative and is clearly focused on helping students achieve their

maximum potential. The new special needs co-ordinator has only been in post for a very short time but has a clear vision of how she wishes the provision to be developed. The leadership of the Link Zone is equally imaginative and makes a significant impact on the calm and friendly atmosphere which is a feature of the school.

Staffing

74. In spite of some weaknesses in geography and to a lesser extent in ICT, the match of staff to the curriculum is good. The match is excellent in physical education and very good in design technology and history.

Accommodation

75. Generally the accommodation is very good and the facilities for practical work in physical education are excellent. The accommodation for students with special educational needs and those supported by EMAT is bright and welcoming thus playing a part in making students feel both valued and respected. There are immaculate displays around the school that are aesthetically pleasing as well as being informative. There is enough space for students to move around the corridors and accessibility arrangements are being developed to cater for all needs. The building is very well cared for and the caretaking staff make an outstanding contribution to the cleanliness of the whole campus. The senior management of the school is aware of the unsatisfactory parts of the accommodation and development plans have been made. The priorities for the school are improved facilities for the sixth form, ICT and humanities departments. The outside areas are being landscaped and redesigned this year. The library is too small for the numbers in the school.

Resources for learning

76. The school has some outstandingly good resources for learning. It operates a radio station receivable within a six mile radius of the school. This enables parents and others to have up-to-date information as to what events are taking place. There is a studio from which television is broadcast to monitors throughout the school. Rapid communication can take place to students and staff. 'Thought for the day' themes can be viewed by all. The school produces videos. One recently produced on the option choices for Year 9 students has been available for all parents. Reprographic facilities are excellent and contribute a great deal to the work of the school. Provision of resources for learning is good in English, music, physical education, psychology and sociology. There is good provision for students with language difficulties and special educational needs. Students with special educational needs benefit from a very good range of resources such as reading books. However there is a shortage of textbooks in history, health and social care, mathematics, modern languages, religious education, science and chemistry. Not all of the texts used in Urdu are appropriate in relation to the new examination specifications. There is a limited range of books in the library; it is too small for the school's needs and is not operating as a fully effective resource for learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

77. The sixth form is led and managed effectively. Students are achieving well because leadership ensures good teaching overall. There is a strong focus on support for the individual and flexibility in meeting students' choices. Students appreciate this approach and are pleased with their decision to join the sixth form. The rising numbers in Year 12 (including recruits from other 11-16 high schools) and the increasing number of students staying on to take more advanced courses is testimony to successful leadership. There is a clear direction for the sixth form's future in terms of raising the profile of advanced level courses to attract more higher attaining students, developing supported self-study, and planning better accommodation.

Resources

78. Although existing provision is managed effectively, there are problems arising from the sixth form's own success. For example, there is urgent need for increased specialist staffing in religious education given the subject's major commitment across the whole school, and particularly to meet the statutory requirements in the burgeoning sixth form. There are also accommodation and resource issues affecting subjects like art and design, health and social care, chemistry, media studies, psychology and religious studies.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. In order to continue to improve the quality of education provided and students' standards, the management of the school should:

- (1) Ensure that higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, are consistently challenged in lessons so that they fully achieve their potential *.
(Paragraphs: 23, 110, 111, 125, 132, 159)
- (2) Improve the school library so that it better supports students' independent learning *.
(Paragraphs: 75, 76, 186)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the quality of accommodation for the sixth form to provide facilities that match the rest of the school, give students an effective area in which to work and meet the needs of the increasing number of students *.
(Paragraphs: 30, 75, 78)
- (2) Improve library provision, study facilities and other resources for sixth formers to support students' independent learning *.
(Paragraphs: 30, 78, 206, 223)

** The school is already working to improve all these matters*

THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

This aspect is discussed throughout the report.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|--------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 7 – 11 | 153 |
| | Sixth form | 61 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | | 63 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 7 – 11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 7 | 38 | 69 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 5 | 25 | 45 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 2 | 15 | 31 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 3 | 25 | 51 | 21 | 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 the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's students

| Students on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of students on the school's roll | 1367 | 306 |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 698 | N/A |

| Special educational needs | Y7– Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|---------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 25 | 3 |
| Number of students on the school's special educational needs register | 145 | 10 |

| English as an additional language | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 999 |

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|--|----------------|
| Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 34 |

| |
|--|
| Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving |
|--|

| |
|----|
| 54 |
|----|

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.7 |
| National comparative data | 7.8 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.3 |
| National comparative data | 1.2 |

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)

| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2002 | N/A | 255 | 255 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | 152 | 156 | 144 |
| | Total | 152 | 156 | 144 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 60 (67) | 61 (51) | 56 (43) |
| | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66) | 66 (66) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 23 (31) | 32 (29) | 22 (15) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43) | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | 190 | 165 | 99 |
| | Total | 190 | 165 | 99 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 75 (68) | 65 (55) | 39 (31) |
| | National | 67 (65) | 70 (68) | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 37 (28) | 39 (26) | 14 (9) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 44 (42) | 34 (33) |

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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2002 | N/A | 247 | 247 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of students achieving the standard specified | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | 128 | 220 | 235 |
| | Total | 128 | 220 | 235 |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | School | 52 (30) | 89 (87) | 95 (94) |
| | National | 50 (48) | 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 student | School | 39.1 (31.2) |
| | National | 39.8 (39.0) |

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 students who achieved all those they studied | School | 55 | 98 |
| | National | | N/A |

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

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|------------|------------|
| | | Boys | Girls | All |
| School | Number of candidates | N/A | 48 | 48 |
| | Average point score per candidate | N/A | 13 (12.21) | 13 (12.21) |
| National | Average point score per candidate | N/A | * (18) | * (17.5) |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations | | | For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| | | Boys | Girls | All | Boys | Girls | All |
| School | Number of candidates | N/A | 37 | 37 | N/A | 11 | 11 |
| | Average point score per candidate | N/A | 13.3 (11.7) | 13.3 (11.7) | N/A | 12.0 (12.4) | 12.0 (12.4) |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National | Average point score per candidate | * | * | * | * | * | * |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|

** National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 354 | 23 | 1 |
| White – Irish | 13 | 3 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 22 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 85 | 20 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 24 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 29 | 0 | 1 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 51 | 2 | 2 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 80 | 0 | 1 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 583 | 9 | 1 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 99 | 24 | 1 |
| Black or Black British – African | 106 | 11 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 85 | 3 | 1 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 46 | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 107.8 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 15.4 |

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of education support staff | 31 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 1066 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 65.9 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 26.9 |
| Key Stage 4 | 21.0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001/2002 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 4 897 506 |
| Total expenditure | 4 751 194 |
| Expenditure per student | 2 927 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 79 512 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 146 312 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 35 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 59 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 4.6 |
| 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 | 1673 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 371 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 49 | 44 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 51 | 45 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 57 | 36 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 43 | 42 | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 45 | 50 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 48 | 42 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 48 | 41 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 71 | 25 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 42 | 47 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 57 | 39 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 51 | 43 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 52 | 36 | 4 | 1 | 1 |

**PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF
THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES
3 AND 4**

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good so students' learning is good and they achieve well over time.
- Students' standards of attainment are improving, particularly at the end of Year 11.
- Relationships in the classroom are good, fostering a productive working environment.
- The leadership and management of the department are good, providing a secure framework for teaching the subject and promoting a concern for standards.

Areas for improvement

- Though wide reading is encouraged as a recreational activity, there is no programme of regular use of the school library.
- Teachers provide students with a variety of opportunities for the use of ICT but there is no programme of activities common to all students prescribed in the scheme of work.

80. Overall, standards of attainment in English are below average, but they represent good achievement in relation to students' standards on entry to the school. Results in the national tests for students in Year 9 in 2002 were below the national average. They were, however, above the average for similar schools. Although the results in 2002 were not as good as in 2001, the trend over time is upward.

81. Results in GCSE English language examinations in 2002 were below average at grades A*-C but above the average for similar schools. Results at grades A*-G were broadly in line with the national average. Results have varied over recent years but improved significantly from 2001 to 2002. Results in GCSE English literature in 2002 were below the national average at grades A*-C. Results at grades A*-G were above average and a greater proportion of students is entered for the examination than is the case nationally. Results have varied over recent years but improved significantly from 2001 to 2002. Students' performance in English language was broadly similar to that in their other subjects, although they did better in mathematics. Students' performance in English literature was better than in English language, however, and better than in all the other subjects taken by most students.

82. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards at the end of Year 9 are generally below average and in line with the results achieved in the national tests. Students are mostly attentive listeners. They follow instructions with little need for repetition and are a polite audience to their classmates. Oral responses are often enthusiastic though many students, particularly of lower levels of prior attainment, with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, speak briefly and colloquially while higher attaining students volunteer detailed responses. Most students are willing to read aloud. In a Year 7 class students were eager to read out the limericks they had written and did so uninhibitedly and with obvious enjoyment. Many students read slowly, however, stumbling over unfamiliar words, hampered by below average reading skills or because they have English as an additional language. They can extract information from and respond to texts, though many need help to understand at more than a simple, factual level. Writing skills are below national expectations. Higher attaining students write at length, generally correctly, though spelling can be uncertain. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs write at

less length and have difficulties but even students of the lowest levels of prior attainment are able to communicate meaning. The process of drafting and revising helps improve students' grammar, punctuation and spelling. Students complete a good variety of increasingly extended writing through good support from teachers and the provision of frameworks for writing. Lower attaining students, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language and who are at an early stage of language development are able to follow the same programme of study as their classmates. They make good progress through the provision of suitably modified materials and extra assistance in the classroom. Students in a Year 7 class developed good understanding of some of the more difficult vocabulary in their novel "Journey to Jo'burg" such as "segregation", "prejudice" and "apartheid" through lively team teaching by the teacher and a learning support assistant. Overall, standards of attainment are broadly similar to those at the time of the previous inspection.

83. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 were generally below average and in line with the results in the GCSE examinations. Students listen actively and respond to opportunities to contribute to group and class discussion. Higher attaining students are fluent speakers. In a Year 11 lesson, students debated people's rights to adopt in a very capable manner, making prepared speeches without just reading them out, maintaining contact with their audience and responding to points other speakers had made. Lower attainers, with encouragement, are articulate, though limited and often colloquial in their contributions. Students' reading skills are generally below average. They respond to a wide range of literary, factual and media texts both orally and in writing but many students need the analysis structures and good guidance provided by teachers to articulate their responses. Students in Year 11 could respond to Bernard MacLaverly's story "Secrets" and show understanding by completing a letter begun in the story through a well-managed class discussion and brainstorming exercise. Writing standards are generally below average. Students complete a variety of extended pieces, which benefit from the provision of a good range of support materials and frameworks upon which many students are dependent. The highest attaining students write with confidence and maturity and their responses, particularly to literature, show sensitivity and perception. There is good attention to drafting and revising, and many students use word-processing. The drafting process generally deals with problems with correctness in the writing of students of lower levels of prior attainment and those still unfamiliar with English, though many responses are brief, with a limited range of vocabulary. Overall, standards of attainment are higher than those at the time of the previous inspection.

84. Students' levels of attainment on entry to the school are well below average overall. Achievement from entry to the end of Year 9 is good. Good attention is paid to the development of literacy skills, and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy is having a positive effect. Achievement from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 is good. Nearly all students are entered for both GCSE English language and literature and obtain a grade, despite the fact that, for many, English is an additional language and some entered the school at an early stage of learning English. In comparison with similar schools, the GCSE results were above average. Grouping arrangements, additional literacy and language support in the classroom, extra revision classes, materials and presentations adapted to meet students' particular needs all promote achievement and the ethos of the school makes a very positive contribution. There is clear statistical evidence that the needs of gifted and talented students are well met – the proportion of students achieving the highest grades A* and A in GCSE literature in 2002 was greater than the national proportion.

85. Students' behaviour is usually good. In lessons they are pleasant and well-motivated. They work cooperatively and have good relationships with teachers and each other. They are courteous, generally listen in silence and appreciate each other's contributions. They show enjoyment of the work. Students in Year 9, for example, contributed with interest to a class discussion of the play "The Bully" and read the text in groups with expression and enthusiasm.

86. Teaching is good, overall. In all of the lessons observed it was satisfactory or better and in nearly three quarters it was good or very good. As a consequence, the quality of students' learning is good. Lessons are well-planned with a variety of activity which stimulates students and maintains their interest. The study of "Poems of Love and Loss" by a Year 11 class was entertainingly informed by the consideration, in pairs, of a stereotypical view of the role of a wife indicated in a cartoon followed by whole-class discussion. The class shared with interest and enjoyment the subsequent individually written "wife wanted" advertisements. Teaching is strongly committed to raising standards and is well informed by a detailed scheme of work which is following the National Literacy Strategy and meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE. As part of the drive to improve literacy, teachers generally encourage their students to read for recreation. However, there are no regular arrangements to use the school library to support and develop recreational reading. Relationships in the classroom are good. Students are managed in a firm but good-humoured manner and treated with consideration for their particular needs, through the provision of a wide range of support materials and frameworks. Lower attaining Year 11 students, for example, were able to respond sensitively to Fleur Adcock's poem "The Girl with Blue Hair" through supportive and sympathetically managed class discussion and the use of clear guidelines for answering written questions. The best teaching is lively and communicates interest and enjoyment. Teaching is less effective when it lacks pace and conviction and does not engage students. Students' work is assessed regularly and helpfully, with detailed comments identifying points for improvement.

87. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a good understanding of developments in English which have been incorporated in the scheme of work. Quite considerable recent staff changes have been accommodated and good practice is shared by a large team of teachers of varied length and nature of experience. Teaching and learning are monitored very well and there is good support for teachers new to the school. There is good practice in the recording of data to inform the process of target setting and modification of teaching strategies.

88. The evidence of the public examination results is that there has been good progress since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have risen, particularly at the end of Year 11. Disappointment was expressed in the previous report about the GCSE results in English literature but in 2002 these were the best of all the results in subjects taken by most students.

Drama

89. Drama is part of the curriculum for all students in Years 7-9. It is a GCSE option for students in Years 10 and 11. Additionally it is an element of the new GNVQ in performing arts now offered to students, although at present only in Year 10.

90. It is long established as a GCSE option. The level of attainment has varied over recent years. It improved significantly from 2001 to 2002 when all the 25 students who entered achieved a grade and the proportion of grades A*-C was broadly in line with the national average.

91. In work seen in the limited observation that was possible during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 are generally in line with the national average. This, in relation to students' levels of attainment on entry to the school, indicates good achievement.

92. Teaching is good overall and at times very good. It is informed by good specialist knowledge and performance skills and communicates interest and enjoyment in the subject. A friendly but purposeful atmosphere is established in lessons, to which students respond well. They work cooperatively in the planning and performance of drama responses to a variety of stimuli, showing imagination and good development of drama skills. Irrespective of level of prior attainment or language capacity, all students can participate equally and make a valuable contribution to performance.

93. In a Year 9 lesson, students showed good recall of the play "Our Day Out" in developing, under lively teacher direction, an ensemble performance of the text of the song which sets the scene. They showed perception in contributing ideas about the characters, performed movements and actions unselfconsciously and delivered the words with enthusiasm. In another lesson, students in Year 9 showed good improvisation skills in preparing and performing group responses to a song in the form of tableaux. Since the theme was teenage gun crime, they showed particular sensitivity and sympathy in the light of recent local and national events. Students in Year 11 showed, in their planning of group responses to the words and music of a song, the capacity to create a dramatic structure and incorporate such techniques as flashbacks and freeze frames. They were able to explain their ideas articulately identifying the theme, mood and message of their planned responses.

94. Under the capable and enthusiastic leadership of a new head of department, it is clear that drama is developing rapidly. The number of students choosing the subject in Year 10 has increased considerably and there are high expectations of future development. A number of extra-curricular clubs enable students further to develop their interest in drama, including one specifically for gifted and talented students. In addition, teachers give their time generously to enable individual students to develop their drama skills. A variety of performances is planned, including a multi-cultural summer show. Drama is making a significant contribution to the life of the school and to the personal development of students.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, which ensures good progress and achievement.
- Results continue to improve in the end of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of students create a good atmosphere for learning
- Teachers plan well to meet the needs of students which results in good progress in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used well enough in lessons to help students' learning.
- There are insufficient textbooks available to support teaching and learning in Years 7-9.
- Subject policy statements are not detailed enough; they do not ensure consistent approaches by teachers.
- Improved use of resources to help starter activities at the beginning of lessons to be used more effectively.

95. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 standards were below average. The average points score was below average for all schools but was above average for similar schools. In relation to students' standards at the beginning of Year 7 results were above average. Results were similar to those in both science and English. Except for 2001, results have improved faster than national trends since 1998. These results represent good achievement in relation to students' standards when they entered the school.

96. In the 2002 GCSE mathematics examination the proportion of students attaining grades A*-C matched the average for all schools and was well above average in comparison with similar schools. In relation to students' standards at the end of Year 9 results were above average. This represents very good achievement for this group of students. Students did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. Results have risen significantly since the last inspection.

97. Standards in the current Year 9 are below average. Students entered the school with well below average standards. Achievement is good. Many students still have difficulty handling numbers confidently in mental and oral activities. Higher attaining students understand the relationship between the circumference and diameter of a circle but average attaining students are not confident in recalling the technical vocabulary associated with circles. Algebraic skills are not well developed; many students find solving equations difficult. Students handle data confidently. In geography, and science, students draw a range of graphs accurately. Problem solving skills are developing well. Students find patterns, establish rules and use formulae.

98. In Year 11 standards are below average. Overall, students' achievement is good. The standards do not match those of the previous year because the standard attained by this group of students at the end of Year 9 was not as high as that of the previous year. In addition, teachers have not yet had enough opportunity to reinforce students' knowledge and understanding through the school's "clinics" and booster classes. Number and algebraic skills are still not as well developed as they should be for most students. As a result, many students do not handle mental calculations confidently and resort to using calculators too readily. Higher attaining students solve quadratic equations confidently but most others have difficulty with algebraic processes. Most students handle data effectively. In the data handling project for GCSE course work students showed a good understanding of different ways of displaying and analysing data.

99. The overall quality of teaching is good. As a result learning is good. Students make good progress and are achieving well. The good subject knowledge of teachers ensures they are able to explain skills and concepts clearly, which helps students with their understanding. Teachers plan well to provide activities that meet students' needs and focus on the learning objectives. For example, in a Year 8 lesson with lower attaining students, the teacher varied the activities well to ensure that students remained interested and, as a result, concentration was maintained and students made good progress. However, the lack of an appropriate textbook in Years 7-9 is resulting in too frequent use of worksheets. Teachers have to work very hard before lessons to provide appropriate materials. Teachers use starter activities at the beginning of most lessons. However, they are not always using the available resources to best effect to develop students' number skills or introduce new skills. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace which ensures good progress in learning. Questioning of students is good which helps students to understand new skills and concepts better. Key words are explained carefully to ensure understanding. Clear explanations are of particular benefit to students who have English as an additional language and are a factor in enabling them to make similarly good progress to their classmates. Teachers involve students well in lessons by getting them to demonstrate and explain to others during discussions. Teachers' good classroom management, together with students' very good attitudes and behaviour, ensures

that students listen well and, when working together, cooperate and share ideas well. Where support staff are provided they are used effectively to support students with special educational needs that ensures they make as good progress as other students. Although a range of activities, including practical and mental activities, are used to help students learn, insufficient opportunities are given for students to use the available computers to help with their learning.

100. Most aspects of management are good. However, the present level of resources is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks available in Years 7-9 to support teaching and learning which results in a higher than expected level of use of worksheets. Plans are in place to improve the position. In addition, policy statements for the department are not detailed enough; they do not ensure consistency across the subject. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good. Standards in Year 9 national tests have improved and those in GCSE examinations have improved significantly.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Attainment in public examinations is improving.
- Students achieve well and make good progress because teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes.
- There is strong leadership of a team of committed teachers that promotes improvement.

Areas for improvement

- All students are not provided with textbooks for use at home, reducing opportunities for independent learning.
- An opportunity to improve is missed because there is not enough sharing of good practice by teachers observing each other.

101. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below the national average. The results were in line with those of schools having students who performed similarly three years previously. They were also in line with those schools having similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals. The results in science were not quite as high as those in English and mathematics. However, the time allocated to science in Years 7-9 was below that in most schools and this adversely affected results. In each of the past five years, the results have followed a rising trend which was particularly pronounced in 2002. The GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average for the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in a science subject. The results were above those schools having students who performed similarly at the end of Year 9. The results were well above those schools having similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals. Nine students took the GNVQ intermediate science in 2002. Seven gained a pass grade and two gained a merit grade. Older students entered the school with attainment levels that were well below average. Standards for the current Year 7 were a little higher but still significantly below average. The standards obtained indicate significant achievement by students as they progress through the school. The results improved on those of the previous years. Students did not perform as well in single and double award science as they did in their other subjects.

102. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are just below average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Progress made in lessons is good overall. Achievement over a longer period of time is good and very good for a significant proportion of students. Most Year 9 students are able to describe metallic properties and use their knowledge to distinguish metals from other solids. The highest attaining students in Year 9 identify variations between humans,

both inherited ones and others affected by the environment. Lower attaining students draw simple circuit diagrams and know how to test for acids and alkalis. Most Year 11 students know the factors which affect the rates of chemical reactions and the higher attaining ones use collision theory to explain the effects. In one lesson, lower attaining Year 11 students, with prompting, applied simple inheritance rules. Manipulative, measuring, observing and recording skills develop to expected levels by the end of Year 9. Analysis skills are at expected levels by the end of Year 11 but evaluation skills are not as well developed by then. Standards of presentation are above average. Students have the numeracy skills enabling them to process their experimental results and present them in various graphical forms. ICT skills are developed to at least the levels expected. A group of Year 7 students competently used the Internet to find out about the planets. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall. They are taught well and given suitable tasks. Almost without exception teachers are well aware of their difficulties and give individuals extra help whenever possible. In some lessons there is additional very effective support. Gifted students also achieve well. They are identified at an early stage and given extension work. The progress of students with language difficulties is carefully monitored. They achieve well and very few continue to have difficulties beyond Year 11.

103. Students have very positive attitudes to learning. They arrive promptly and well prepared for lessons and quickly settle. They listen carefully and concentrate very well on what they have to do. Students have good relationships with their teachers that promote confidence and they willingly respond and put forward ideas. They respond well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and effort. When in groups they co-operate very well and work safely and productively. Their attitudes to homework are good. The high quality of the relationships between teachers and students together with the very positive attitudes of students are major factors in helping students learn well in lessons and make good progress.

104. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is always at least satisfactory and is good or better in over three-quarters of lessons. It is very good or excellent in almost one half of lessons. Teachers know their subject well and teach it in a lively and informative manner. They make science comprehensible by using examples familiar to students. Some capture interest by relating relevant personal experiences. In the best lessons, a starter activity is used to quickly focus students and lessons conclude with a check on what has been learned. Questioning is usually skilful and well focussed on individuals. Occasionally more is needed to check understanding and to draw out information. There is usually a good variety of activities. Class management is very good and students are kept busy throughout. Investigative work is carried out in a safe, orderly manner. Teachers ensure that task sheets are appropriate for the levels at which students are working. Teachers successfully develop students' literacy skills. They frequently emphasise key words and have them on display. Students with difficulties volunteer to read aloud to the whole class. In one lesson, students delivered presentations prepared by them working in groups. There was spontaneous applause from the rest of the class for their efforts. Communication skills developed well and students gained much self esteem. The quality of marking is a particular strength. Students' work is marked promptly and thoroughly and teachers write extensive, encouraging and informative comments. These help students move forward.

105. The curriculum has added breadth. A start has been made on implementing the national strategy for younger students. For the older ones there are courses in single and double award science in addition to biology, chemistry and physics. Extra classes are held after normal lessons to further help students. Assessments of students' performance are regular and comprehensive. The information is used extensively and most effectively in setting individual targets for all students.

106. The department is well led and managed. Strong leadership is promoting higher standards. There is careful monitoring of performance including observation of teaching and the quality of marking. Teachers are deployed effectively making good use of their specialist knowledge. Each teacher has a specific responsibility within the department. Technical support is of high quality. A good team spirit is much in evidence with a united commitment to high standards and continuous improvement. Good support is provided for newly qualified teachers and those new to the school. The quality of the accommodation varies from satisfactory to good. However, as a result of rising numbers, a few lessons are not taught in laboratories and progress in those lessons is hampered by the lack of facilities for practical activities. Not all students are provided with books for use at home. Otherwise the resources for learning are adequate.

107. Since the previous inspection, attainment in public examinations has risen. In the report of that inspection there were no other specific references to aspects of provision in science.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; lessons are well planned with good integration of theory and practical work.
- Good use of sketch books for research and development in Years 10 and 11 enhances learning.
- Assessment is good and the support given matches students' needs and leads to good achievement in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Students' insufficient use of ICT and ceramics limits their experience in Years 7-9.
- A more individual approach to media choice in Years 10 and 11 would widen the options for the GCSE unendorsed certificate.

108. The proportion of students gaining higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2002 was average. There has been an upward trend in results with half of all students entered achieving A*-B grades. This is a direct result of assessment procedures which now ensure that students in all years have opportunities to discuss their achievement and set targets for future development.

109. Teachers' assessments in 2002 show that attainment by the end of Year 9 is below average. However, these assessments are unreliable. On the evidence of work seen during the inspection, standards are average by the end of Year 9. Students' achievements in Years 7-9 are good in relation to their well below average knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school. These achievements are because the teaching is good and students' attitudes to learning are positive. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, and students who are learning English as an additional language make good progress. They are supported well in classrooms and apply themselves purposefully. Little evidence was seen of the creative use of ICT, although students sometimes use it in research for historical information. Students are able to explore ideas and gain access to visual information, including images from different historical and cultural contexts. Evidence from sketch books shows that students successfully demonstrate the skills involved in exploring and assessing information. Their ability to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings is evident. Positive responses were seen when students were actively engaged in debate about their work and clear about their immediate learning

objectives. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, students were able to arrange shapes for composition and experimented well with colour and use of line.

110. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is average. Achievement by the age of 16 is good in relation to students' standards when they began the course. Students' work shows some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. They develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work and demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Sketch books are annotated and used effectively and technical language develops well. Students enjoy their art and design lessons and are well motivated because of the teachers' enthusiasm and good preparation of different levels of work, designed to cater for the levels of attainment found in the class. However, higher attaining students are not consistently challenged sufficiently to achieve their full potential. In a Year 11 lesson students were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best teaching, the pace of work is good and the learning is reinforced by the teacher. When tasks are less challenging, or lacking in pace, some students become restless and learning is slower. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of their students. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is good at all stages, with the exception that the level of challenge provided for higher attaining students is not consistently high enough. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing the work of the previous lesson enable students to build upon their prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. Teachers make good use of praise to encourage the participation of all students and make good use of question and answer to ensure students are actively involved, to reinforce learning and to check how much progress has been made. Teachers pay suitable attention to improving students' literacy: sketch books reveal that students are given active support with the development of their reading and writing skills. There is good integration of theory and practical work. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, students were developing direct observational drawing skills and connections made with Picasso and Georges Braque were being considered effectively. Homework is used well to support project work in Years 10 and 11. A Year 11 lesson observed exemplified this with a well structured and challenging three-dimensional study in which all students were absorbed in their individual work.

112. The newly appointed head of department provides good leadership that promotes improvement. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are clear; appropriate priorities have now been established for the development of the subject. The department makes a very good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of students. Teachers give freely of their time to students and their learning benefits as a result. There is insufficient use of ICT and working with clay for three-dimensional study. Students have too few opportunities for individual and personal approaches to study in a variety of media in Years 10 and 11. Extra curricular activities are very good. Visits to galleries and museums and the use of an artist in residence have a positive effect upon the quality and range of students' work. Departmental meetings are used well to share ideas and good practice. Newly qualified teachers are well supported and monitored effectively through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment informs curriculum planning well. Written aims with clear statements about what students are to learn now link programmes of study and teaching approaches. Judgement cannot be made regarding improvements since the previous inspection, as art and design was not included in the report.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The innovative programme of Year 7 lessons and six whole school days devoted to business and citizenship skills, enlisting the involvement of the wider community.
- Many opportunities for students to develop the skills of active citizenship and high expectations that they will take them.
- Effective management and enthusiastic leadership make a good contribution to the development of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Lessons containing aspects of citizenship across the curriculum are not always clearly identified as such for students.

113. Following its successful bid to become a Business Enterprise College, which included elements of citizenship, the school decided to achieve maximum impact for the new initiatives by launching a series of business and citizenship days for the whole school. These replace personal development lessons in Years 8 and 9 but are in addition to tutor-led lessons of business and citizenship education in Year 7 and blocks of citizenship and careers lessons in Year 10 and 11. It is too early to judge students' attainment in the subject at this early stage in its development but the indications are that students are attaining expected standards by Years 9 and 11. Beyond formal lessons, the school has a strong tradition of promoting active citizenship through student representative bodies, many extra-curricular activities and opportunities for supporting charities. These experiences help to develop the qualities required in a responsible citizen.

114. In Year 7, students are making good progress and reaching average standards in the work they are doing with the Imperial War Museum North on the resolution of conflict. In lessons, they gain a good understanding of the role of the Commonwealth as a family of nations that has evolved from empire. The use of a World map to locate students' own cultural heritage revealed the Commonwealth in microcosm, helping all students to celebrate the diversity of the school community. In religious education, Year 9 students showed good understanding of prejudice and discrimination in their role plays on the subject. In this instance, the connection with citizenship was not made sufficiently explicit.

115. In Year 10 citizenship lessons attainment is about average. Students show critical awareness of role models in youth culture and accept their own responsibilities for setting a good example to younger students. In a lesson on the plight of refugees, students showed good understanding of the issues over asylum and respect for human rights. The issue of rights is picked up in other subject areas, such as religious education, where students consider the injustice caused by prejudice and discrimination. In drama, Year 11 students working on a citizenship theme were planning a piece of drama to dispel the fears of primary school students about to transfer to secondary school. Their work showed good development of responsible attitudes towards others.

116. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good overall. Lessons are well planned with clear aims, which are achieved through a range of activities. On the citizenship courses, teachers make good use of video material and discussion methods to promote effective learning. The Year 7 course is supported by good lesson materials through the war museum project. Resources for the Year 10 course are more limited and teachers less familiar with them, which slowed students' learning in one lesson seen. Teachers make relevant use of youth culture to explore ideas about the responsibilities of citizens. Very good

teaching of citizenship themes in drama and religious education used improvised role play most effectively to enhance students' understanding of issues.

117. Students' attitudes towards the subject are generally positive. The new business and citizenship days have been well received. Their novel format and the involvement of the wider community are having a big impact on students' learning, registering the importance of the subjects for their personal development. Students' attitudes are formed by the general school ethos of harmonious relationships among diverse groups of students. They take pride in their school, identifying with its strong corporate image as 'the home of excellence'. This sense of belonging is fostered by the Range Radio and Range TV broadcasts. There is also the expectation that students will take part in extra-curricular citizenship activities from the full programme on offer, and many do. In two of the lessons observed, students brought in money they had been raising for charity. Students' experience in the school community is equipping them well for their role as citizens.

118. Aspects of citizenship have been identified by all departments in their planning and schemes of work and were evident during the inspection, notably in dance, drama and religious education. The school is looking to raise the profile of citizenship across subjects by emphasising it in those lessons where it is featured. Students have the opportunity to practise democracy by electing representatives to year councils and the school council. Candidates run election campaigns and the voting procedures simulate local elections, to the extent of using their ballot boxes. Councillors feel they can make a difference in the life of the school and have put together an action plan of their proposals for teachers' consideration. Similarly, the fifty form representatives on the Police Forum, which met during the inspection week, showed good knowledge of local concerns in their comprehensive agenda of items for discussion. The school's many links with the local community serve to promote students' understanding and skills in citizenship.

119. Dual leadership and management of the subject by two of the assistant headteachers are proving highly effective. They have a clear vision for the development of the subject and have enlisted the help of the local authority adviser for citizenship with their planning. They have taken a bold approach to teaching the curriculum through citizenship days across all years, including the sixth form. Teachers received in-service training prior to the launch of the project and the organisation of the days gives good opportunity for staff to work alongside other professionals from the community. Files are provided to record students' progress in citizenship and encourage self-review and target setting.

120. The school has made an impressive start with its new citizenship curriculum. The initiative is well supported by the school's general ethos as a strong community, which boosts students' confidence in themselves and encourages them to use their talents for the good of others.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good specialist teaching promotes good learning.
- Very good relationships contribute to very good personal development.
- The cultural backgrounds of all students are celebrated effectively.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of students' experience on entry to the school to help planning to meet their needs.
- Improvement in the accuracy of teachers' assessments of students' standards.
- Improvement of computer-aided design and manufacture.
- Provision of technical support for resistant materials and graphics.

121. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average for students of their age. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that these assessments are unreliable and that standards are just in line with the national average. A lack of standardisation among teachers misses the opportunity to establish a consistent use of National Curriculum levels and leads to inaccurate assessments.

122. Between Years 7-9 students make rapid progress and achievement is good. The good match of work to students' capabilities enables students to build a strong base of knowledge and understanding across the range of materials and techniques they use. Both practical and theory work are carefully marked. Feedback comments help student to see what they must do to improve their work. There is good celebration of students' individual cultural backgrounds. Many students contribute interesting recipe development and textiles design ideas to lessons. These ideas are influenced by their parents' interest in what they are doing at school which strengthens students' confidence and raises their self-esteem. Good use of key words specific to the subject and worksheets that allow students to move at their own pace ensure learning is matched to needs. Literacy and numeracy are further extended through practical work.

123. In 2002, GCSE examination results were below the national average. These were aggregated results across food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles, with textiles and food technology producing the best results. Students performed less well in design and technology than in their other subjects. However, the entry level for the subject was higher than the national figures, showing the strong commitment to equality for all in designing and making.

124. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average overall in a wide range. Across Years 10 and 11, students focus their learning into one area of design and technology and their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. During this time, students' skills and knowledge become more closely related to commercial manufacturing. They learn to work to a product specification, but many still struggle to produce accurate design drawings, which has an adverse effect on standards. A wide range of research and modification of designs enables students to produce high quality end products, such as eye-catching media posters to advertise a movie in graphics, and a range of experiments and tasting sessions to produce a vegetarian product in food technology. Much of students' work includes some use of ICT but the limitation on computer-aided design and manufacture restricts students' opportunities to gain the higher grades in examinations

and affects overall achievement. In Year 11, continuing literacy difficulties worry students as they approach their written examination, with a consequent effect on standards.

125. Students with special educational needs and those from different cultural backgrounds match the progress of their peers because teachers make good use of data and assessment and individual education plans to modify the curriculum to match need. Gifted and talented students are also known well, but extension work does not always stretch them enough to reach their full potential.

126. Teaching and learning are good with elements of very good teaching. Planning is innovative and introduces lots of opportunities for students to extend their learning and knowledge of technology in industry as well as in the home. For example, there are trips to the Clothes Show in Birmingham for textile students and close links for resistant materials students with a technology company. In addition to financial support for the department, this collaboration enriches the business and enterprise links that relate to the schools specialist status. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good because of the consistency of behaviour management in the department and the very good role models provided by teaching and non-teaching staff. For example, good demonstrations and quality displays highlight the standards expected. Good marking and monitoring of test results enable teachers to give good feedback to students on how to improve their standards.

127. Management of the department is good and uses the diverse skills and industrial experience of the teaching team well to provide challenging learning. The effective technical support for food technology and textiles is not available for resistant materials and graphics, which has an impact on preparation of materials and the quality of final products. The department has recently moved into bright and attractive accommodation. Unfortunately the smaller rooms now in use restrict the independent learning vital to designing and making. The most recent inspection did not focus on design and technology but overall standards are improving.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Skilful management of students and very good relationships create a good climate for learning.
- Good management provides well organised documentation.

Areas for improvement

- Lessons are sometimes over-directed by teachers, reducing opportunities for students to develop their independence.
- Higher attaining students are provided with too few challenging extension activities.

128. Students' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with the national average. Inspection evidence points to limited but consistent improvement since the previous inspection. Achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to students' prior learning with good gains being made in Years 8 and 9. During the inspection, the majority of students worked broadly in line with national standards including higher attaining students, whilst a significant minority worked below.

129. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were broadly average in terms of the proportion of students achieving A*-G grades, but below the national average in terms of the proportion achieving A*-C grades. Results were below those of similar schools and students

performed less well in geography than some of their other subjects. However, results have shown a consistent improvement since the previous inspection. There is still a noticeable absence of students achieving A*-A grades.

130. Students' progress and achievement are satisfactory overall in Years 7-9. The majority of students have a sound understanding and knowledge of geographical processes and they interpret information well. They make good use of these skills in written work and class discussion. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 class who were able to interpret and analyse promotional reports and videos and comment on bias and impact. Progress has been affected, particularly in Year 7, by the shortfall in allocated curriculum time and by timetabling issues.

131. In Years 10 and 11, standards are broadly average and students' achievement is satisfactory. The majority of students have a good understanding of the methods of geographical enquiry, of collecting and analysing information and of reaching valid conclusions. Middle and lower attaining students generally make good progress in lessons having competent skills in graphical and numerical skills. Not all students understand clearly the meaning of geographical terms and have difficulty with the use of conceptual knowledge in their oral and written work.

132. Although higher attainers make broadly satisfactory progress throughout the school, a minority of students underachieve because the work they are set is not well enough matched to their level of attainment, particularly in Years 7-9. Progress is further hindered by the absence of opportunities for developing communication and problem solving skills. Higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable because they have too few opportunities to use higher level skills and are not provided with enough extension activities.

133. Students have positive attitudes to the subject. They are attentive and self-disciplined and arrive promptly to lessons. All students are well organised and settle to work quickly. Students' good manners and courtesy towards teachers and other adults are impressive and reflect well on the good relationships that the department cultivates between teachers and students.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a wide knowledge of their subject enabling them to present well-structured and clear explanations. They ask appropriate and relevant questions to ensure all students gain a clear understanding of the topic. However, higher attainers are not sufficiently stretched through rigorous questioning. Effective and well planned guidance is given to all students and is particularly effective in the preparation for GCSE examination. Successful teaching is characterised by skilful management of students through high expectations, brisk pace and creative use of resources with suitable variation of tasks. In less successful lessons, students are rarely inspired to share their teachers' enthusiasm. Progress is often hindered because lessons are too directed by the teacher which inhibits students' interest and their opportunity to work creatively. There is, for the most part, insufficient variety of tasks and too few opportunities for creativity and enrichment. Tasks are not always sequenced to match the learning requirements of all students

135. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. The curriculum leader continues to set high standards through meticulous and well-organised documentation and assessment procedures and through guidance and support for GCSE examination candidates. Nevertheless, it remains for the department to improve the achievement of higher attaining students and to improve the quality of teaching and learning to bring about higher

productivity within the classroom. Teachers work well together but do not share new ideas and good practice sufficiently.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, with some very good features, and promotes good learning.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable.
- Very positive relationships between teachers and their students encourage and support learning.
- Achievement is good.

Areas for improvement

- There are no books for use at home to encourage students to read, review, engage in research or prepare for their lessons. Students do not read sufficiently widely.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to support learning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently developed.

136. Students enter the school with well below average standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average. Observation of lessons and analysis of students' work confirm these standards and indicate that achievement is good in relation to students' earlier learning. Results in GCSE examinations have continually improved over the last three years and in 2002 the proportion of students awarded grade A*-C was above average.

137. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. All students are able to use a wide range of materials in their work and investigations, including worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames, card-packs and a range of primary and secondary evidence. Average attaining students develop a wide range of skills, including interpretation of evidence and understanding of chronology. For example, they describe accurately the conditions suffered by the slaves during the "middle passage" from Africa to America. However, unlike the higher attaining students, they cannot examine and explain the reasons for, and the results of, such events.

138. Given their attainment at entry, students of all levels of attainment successfully make good progress in their first three years in the school. Students with special educational needs make similarly good progress because their teachers know them well, use materials that are well matched to their needs and provide effective guidance in lessons. Similarly, students whose first language is not English, also make good progress. However, students' overall progress is hampered by their weak oracy and literacy skills. Nor do they have sufficient access to ICT to support their understanding of the subject and ensure a high level of presentation of work.

139. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average and a significant number of students attain higher standards. This represents good achievement during Years 10 and 11. Students develop their evaluative and analytical skills effectively, and with the help of their teacher, they develop their own independent arguments in replying to questions that require them to give their opinions. For example, Year 11 students, studying the role of Edwin Chadwick in a range of nineteenth century legislation from the Poor Law to Public Health, amass sophisticated and compelling arguments to answer the question: "Edwin Chadwick, friend or foe of the people?"

140. Teaching is good overall, and it is very good in some lessons. Teachers know their subject very well. They have an obvious love for it and this commitment is strongly communicated to students, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a wide range of methods that support learning well. In the best lessons, teachers challenge students intellectually and encourage independent thinking and learning. In those lessons judged to be otherwise satisfactory, there is a tendency to allow some students to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning. In all lessons, there is appropriate emphasis on literacy within the classroom and high expectations are set for reading and for the use of correct technical language. However, wider reading outside the classroom is still not well developed for the vast majority of students. This is exacerbated by their having no textbook for use at home and this reduces the opportunities for them to review their work, extend their understanding, undertake research or prepare for the next lesson. Homework is set regularly and marking is well focused, supporting progress, learning and achievement.

141. Learning is good. Students learn successfully. They behave very well, with high concentration and focus. Very good relationships underpin learning because students listen intently to each other and work well together in all years. In several lessons, students worked very effectively in groups or pairs, a method of organisation thoughtfully employed by the department, mindful of supporting the attainment of all students including those whose first language is not English. However, overall achievement is hampered by the difficulties many students have in recalling information, weak examination techniques and the lack of wider and deeper reading. This has an adverse effect on both the extent of students' knowledge and the development of independent learning skills, both of which are essential for higher grades in examinations

142. Accommodation is satisfactory in terms of size of rooms and general décor. However, the housing of the department in demountable buildings creates problems of storage of resources. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. However, there is a lack of textbooks and a lack of access to ICT.

143. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There are areas of management which are still not fully developed. The monitoring of both teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous. Better strategic management of departmental finances is needed to ensure an appropriate provision of resources for learning. The head of department gives good academic leadership to the subject and is committed to raising standards. In this, he is well supported by his colleagues whom he, in turn, supports.

144. The trend in standards since the previous inspection has been one of good improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management are contributing to rising standards.
- Teachers' expectations, the pace of lessons and variety of activities contribute to progress.
- The focus and effectiveness of the curriculum, particularly in Years 7-9, and its range in Years 10-11 provide well for students' needs.
- Students' levels of achievement are high, especially in Years 7-9
- The growth of productive links with organisations outside the school contributes to improved learning.

Areas for improvement

- The match between class sizes and numbers of machines in the ICT rooms, which are generally too small.
- The low level of extension of students' work through their activities in other subjects and their guided use of ICT outside of lesson time.
- Aspects of teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding.

145. At the end of each year, teachers assess Year 9 students' grasp of ICT. There has been a steady, marked improvement in what these students can do, know and understand - from significantly below average in the years up to 1999 to match the average in 2002. Last summer, 67 per cent of Year 9 students reached the national target of Level 5. This improvement is the result of a more focused programme, the provision of better resources in Years 7-9 and specific ICT lessons provided for all students.

146. In Years 10 and 11, all the students have specific ICT lessons and are able now to choose from a wide range of other courses. At the end of Year 11, in the case of the full GCSE, there has again been a steady, marked improvement in the students' grasp of the subject over recent years, from significantly below to well above national averages. During the same period, there was also some improvement, to slightly above national averages, in the GCSE short course results. More than half the students entered for the Intermediate GNVQ examination achieved a distinction: this is much better than the national picture.

147. In work seen during the inspection, standards match results in tests and examinations. In Years 7-9, work seen in lessons, folders, and talking to students about their work show that what the girls can do, know and understand are broadly in line with national averages; this represents good achievement in view of the fact that many students enter the school with a poor grasp and experience of the subject. During those three years, the students meet a wide range of ICT situations - almost all become competent and confident in word processing and Internet access (though few are fluent accurate typists and on the Internet few know how to compare sources of information); unusually, most have also gained some principles of computer control by using the program *Logo*. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average for the courses they follow: in particular, those working towards the full GCSE become fairly rapid yet thoughtful typists (though not all use both hands or think of their audiences) and often show a good grasp of how to work with the Internet, spreadsheets and database management software; these students produce good coursework that shows a clear understanding of ICT as a technique for solving "real-life" problems, for instance in small businesses. There is also a course in Years 10 and 11 leading to the Key Skills qualification in ICT; in this case a group of higher attaining Year 10 students were seen very quickly and effectively coming to grips with the technique of mail

merging, and doing so with great insight – they are already at level 2, while the folders of the corresponding students in Year 11 show these to be close to level 3, the national target for Advanced Level students at the end of Year 13. Higher attaining students achieve well in all courses in Years 7-11, compared to what they could do when they entered the school, as do students whose grasp of English is still a barrier to learning and those with other special educational needs: everyone is stretched.

148. While the ICT programme in Years 7-9 is well designed and effective, and there are enough courses in Years 10 and 11 for everyone to find something suitable, there is too little opportunity for the students to extend what they learn in their lessons – to practise, to reinforce, to explore, to ponder, to absorb. Indeed, in the case of all subjects in the school, there is as yet no view in practice of ICT as an important resource for teaching and learning. While some good things happen in a number of subjects and there is a general, fast growing acceptance of the potential of ICT to support learning, students are not consistently encouraged to develop their skills by frequent, managed activities in their other subjects.

149. Most students enjoy the subject, believe in its potential to improve their career prospects, use ICT at home, and react very well - even with excitement - to lessons; some, indeed, find inspiration in ICT. Discussion with students throughout the school shows that they would welcome more access to ICT – though there is some good practice, they would like more opportunities in their other subjects, more practical homework tasks, more encouragement and opportunity to use ICT before and after school and in breaks.

150. The overall quality of teaching is good and much of it is very good or excellent. Most lessons are thoroughly planned, and there is widespread use of very well focused learning objectives that meet the needs of different groups of students within the classes. Most lessons move at a rapid pace, often even when the students are working on their own, and it is common for teachers to use a great range of activities and resources. For example, lessons commonly switch frequently between whole class discussion, work in pairs and in small groups, individuals reading aloud or making presentations to the others; between work on paper, using a range of worksheets, textbook-based activities, and tasks on computers; between such teaching resources as a laptop with a data projector, wall charts, flash cards, whiteboard, role play, acting out computer instructions, and video. The department has a wonderful concept of “mini-workshops” for groups of students in practical lessons – seen to be very successful in the case of Year 11 database work – and also makes much, and growing, use of the school's studios and outside organisations. Throughout one excellent lesson, effective use was made of the new interactive whiteboard. Homework tasks are often very effective in extending students' learning. The methods teachers have for assessing learning and discussing what they find with the students are very good and contribute to students' progress throughout Years 7-11. As a result of this high quality teaching, in particular teachers' high expectations, whether students find learning easy or hard they remain very focused on the lessons, quite often show they are inspired, frequently revel in applying new ideas to new situations, and learn those new ideas at a good rate as well as quickly gaining in understanding.

151. Leadership and management are very good. Particular strengths are the support of, and contribution by, members of the school's senior management team to the monitoring of the department's work to keep that work focused and of growing effectiveness. There is very clear educational direction and excellent linkage between what goes on in the subject and the school's values; this is despite the as yet comparatively low contributions to ICT development from other subjects. Potentially effective systems have been put in place to develop ICT as a whole-school resource for more effective teaching and learning and most teachers have had successful training. However, these developments have not yet had time to have full effect.

152. Two aspects of ICT are unsatisfactory as regards management of resources. First (and this is being addressed) - despite the teachers' good grasp of theory and skills, dedication and teaching abilities - at the time of the inspection none was qualified in both ICT and its teaching. Thus in a number of lessons the teacher concerned made small but significant errors (for instance in the specialist vocabulary), could not always think of relevant examples of new ideas, showed an out-of-date knowledge, and/or could not decide whether a student's suggested answer to a question was correct or not.

153. The other unsatisfactory aspect of resources is harder to deal with. There is no ICT room in the school with sufficient computers to handle full sized classes, other than some classes in the sixth form and in subjects with small teaching groups. Because of this, in almost all lessons in IT rooms in Years 7 – 11 there are not enough computers for everyone, making it harder for all individuals to develop their skills and understanding and for the teachers to assess progress. Many of the rooms are physically too small as well - making movement difficult and adding to the problems of over-heating and poor ergonomics. Although the provision of computers and other equipment in the school is up to national averages and better in some areas and the network is in a very good state, it is likely that these problems with the ICT rooms are holding back the students who work in them as well as discouraging use outside of lesson time and in the teaching of other subjects.

154. There was little mention of ICT in the previous report in 2000.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Strengths

- The substantial rise in GCSE French and German results in 2002.
- The quality of teaching in these subjects which promotes good achievement.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers which help students succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Curricular provision which is now holding back the development of the department.
- There is insufficient access to computer facilities to support learning.
- Timetabling and staffing provision for Spanish.

155. Students' results in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with the national average for all schools for the second successive year, while remaining below the national average for girls. Total results in GCSE modern languages examinations were broadly in line with national averages in 2002. This represents a very large increase on the figures for 2001 and is due to substantial rises in the success rates for French and German. The percentage of students gaining grades A* to C in French has risen from 25 per cent in 2000 to 42 per cent in 2002 and is now approaching the national average. This success has been achieved alongside a 50 per cent increase in the number of students entered for the examination. The entry for German has declined over the same period but results have risen sharply from a position in line with national averages to a point far above. The number of students studying Spanish, which is provided for a small group of students in Years 10 and 11, has increased slightly in the last three years but results have remained well below national averages. These results represent good achievement for students in Years 9 and 11 as their prior attainment on starting their courses is well below average in Year 7 and below average when they enter Year 10.

156. Overall, in work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are below average. In German they are average. This is because the students in the higher attaining groups in Year 8 respond eagerly to the challenge of a new language and are provided with a teaching programme which accelerates their learning. In contrast, the progress of their French counterparts slows over the two years and the gap between higher and middle attaining students shrinks as the latter have one more lesson over the same period of time. Students of all abilities make steady progress in listening and speaking, benefiting from the consistent use by the teachers of the foreign language and the opportunities they have to practise language through structured dialogues and working in pairs. There is, however, a lack of depth in the written work of higher attaining students, which is holding down standards.

157. Overall, standards of work seen in Year 11 are average. They are just below average in French, well above average in German, and well below average in Spanish. Students studying French and German have more opportunities to develop their reading skills by working through a good range of articles, some of which are derived from the Internet with accompanying exercises devised by the teacher. The better match of teaching to students' needs, the level of help given by the teachers in the classroom and the strengths of extra-curricular activities are key factors in helping students to be successful. Higher attaining students in French use flow charts effectively to organise their ideas for oral and extended writing assignments, middle attaining students begin to work in greater depth using a suitable range of verbs in the perfect tense, while lower attaining students concentrate on revision of earlier work and extensive preparation for coursework and oral examinations. The standards of students in Spanish are low as the course is too short to cater adequately for the wide range of ability and deficiencies in timetabling and staffing provision result in a course which is ill-gearred to raise the self-esteem of the majority of the students. In all years, students with English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress.

158. Overall, teaching is good. It is very good in German, good in French and satisfactory in Spanish. German teaching has a strong methodical approach and is well focused. This provides strong reinforcement for beginners in the acquisition of skills. For example, in Year 8 the teacher provides a wide range of activities, carefully interlinked to extend students' learning. The subject enjoys more continuity of staffing and consequently the teachers have a better knowledge of their students and this is reflected in the strategies they use to maximise students' prospects of success. For example, in Year 11 the students practise higher level structures and vocabulary, specifically designed to boost their oral and coursework grades. In all years, but especially in the beginners' classes, the department is working hard to develop literacy skills. This is helping to raise attainment in these years, as shown in a Year 8 German lesson where students successfully identified grammatical distinctions and used accusative forms confidently. In all languages, teachers use a variety of aids expertly to present language and to cater for students' diverse learning needs. They are adept at using the overhead projector to provide support for constructing dialogues and when this is accompanied by thorough preparation and careful questioning to check comprehension and to make students think in the language, students have more confidence when they proceed to tackle role-plays. Lessons are well planned with a clear sequence of activities. Teachers ensure students keep up with the lesson by checking they understand explanations, tasks and instructions. This gives the students confidence and results in good levels of concentration. When it is evident that students are having difficulty, teachers in the better lessons take appropriate action. For example, in a good Year 7 French lesson the teacher's flexibility enabled him to try another, more successful route to help students understand. In teaching which was less successful, some methods did not fully engage the students: the students were dutiful, but less actively involved in learning. Students are responsive to the enthusiastic approach of the teachers and the encouragement they provide. This was shown in a Year 11 French lesson where the teacher used the foreign language assistant well to model conversations and illustrate grammatical distinctions. Strong classroom management

is the norm and this cements a good rapport between teachers and students and provides a positive climate where students know they will be supported in their learning. Students cooperate and help each other well when working in pairs. Teachers insist on high standards in the presentation of work. It is regularly and helpfully marked and teachers often provide detailed guidance on how students can improve. On a few occasions teachers were not assiduous enough in ensuring students recorded homework, thereby reducing its impact. Teachers have full assessment records on students and use them well in most lessons. Learning is assessed according to National Curriculum criteria but students' awareness of their levels on a day to day basis is shaky. While teachers make good use of ICT, no examples of students' use of computers were evident.

159. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The academic leader provides strong educational direction and a rigorous approach to support the drive to improve standards. She promotes a sense of identity and pride in the achievements of the department which motivates the team. The efforts and time involved in integrating all four new staff have deflected attention from other areas. For example, the schemes of work for French need to be adapted to departmental requirements to make them fully effective, in particular for the higher attaining classes in Years 8 and 9. The structure of the curriculum results in a narrow provision for a second foreign language in Year 8 and a course of reduced value in Spanish reduces the contribution the department can make to students' achievement and the wider school community.

160. Progress from the previous inspection cannot be judged as that inspection made insufficient reference to individual subjects.

Urdu

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results have been well above the national average for the last three years.
- Learning is good because teaching is good.
- Very good behaviour and motivation have positive effect on students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- More use of ICT is needed to support learning.
- To support learning further, homework needs to be given more regularly and clearly identified in students' exercise books.
- The scheme of work needs to be improved in the light of new GCSE course requirements.

161. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. GCSE examination results for A*-C grade in 2000 and 2002 were well above the national average. In 2001 the results for A*-C grade were in line with the national average. The results for A*-G grade were above the national average in 2000 and 2002 and in line with the national average in 2001.

162. Students' achievement is very good considering that the teaching of Urdu is not provided in Years 7-9. After school classes for those who cannot learn Urdu during school time, or for those who need additional support, are having a positive effect on students' achievement. Students' speaking and listening skills are better developed than their reading and writing skills. They answer questions showing good understanding of the topic being discussed. For example, in one Year 11 class most students were able to discuss different types of jobs. Their pronunciation and intonation were good. In another Year 11 class, most

students could answer multiple choice questions after reading a text in Urdu but some needed the teacher's help to do so. Higher attaining students can write long paragraphs on topics such as 'Myself', 'My friend', 'Eid' and 'Weather in England'. Average and below average attaining students can also write short paragraphs but make several spelling and grammatical errors. There are no students with special educational needs in Urdu lessons but students who have English as an additional language are making good progress. In a Year 11 class one gifted and talented student who scored A* grade in her GCSE examination is progressing well in her AS level course.

163. The quality of teaching is good overall. The teacher is a native speaker, has good knowledge of the subject and uses the language in class with a very positive effect on students' learning. In lessons where teaching is good, lessons are well planned, objectives are clear, expectations are high, students fully participate, work is challenging and matches students' capabilities. Work is regularly marked but comments for further improvement are very brief. Homework is not given regularly and it is hard to judge from students' exercise books which piece of work is done as homework. The use of ICT and audio-visual aids is too limited. However, the teacher is making good use of the laptop computer provided by the school to prepare good quality worksheets. The present scheme of work is not very helpful to the teacher, as it does not show what work is to be covered in each term and how much time is to be spent on each topic. Students are very well behaved in lessons and very keen to learn because the relationships are good.

164. Urdu is well managed by the teacher who is supervised by the head of modern foreign languages. The teacher attends all departmental meetings and is fully supported by the head of department. The relationships between the teacher and the head of department are good. Resources are adequate but there is a need for more appropriate teaching materials such as textbooks to meet the demands of the new GCSE course.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching, especially in the development of students' abilities to perceive sounds and rhythms (aural skills), which underpins good learning in performing, composing and listening, the principal features of the music curriculum.
- Very good extra-curricular activities help to extend students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- There are no major areas that are considered unsatisfactory. However, higher achieving students are not always sufficiently stretched so as to achieve their full potential.

165. Standards in Years 7-9 are average, representing good achievement in relation to students' prior attainment. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average reflecting good progress maintained from the end of Year 9.

166. Teacher's assessment of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 showed that the proportion of students who achieved level 5 and above was close to the national average, and improved from one year to the next. In 2001, the proportion of students' gaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations was above average and this proportion increased in 2002.

167. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Students know and understand basic notation and can respond to written music satisfactorily. The development of students' aural skills, by performing carefully graduated exercises, is systematically carried out during Years 7-9, so that they become adept at reproducing quite complex rhythmic patterns. Keyboard skills are not so well developed, although students' understanding of chords (two or more sounds played simultaneously) is good, and they are able to access a range of basic pre-set chords on electronic keyboards. These skills are put to satisfactory use in composing songs and short instrumental pieces of average standard. A good range of songs and music from other cultures, for example gamelan, are known, and students have a satisfactory knowledge of composers and styles.

168. A good number of students develop their musical attainment with additional instrumental lessons on a range of instruments that includes, unusually, the balalaika, (a three stringed Russian lute with a fretted fingerboard and a triangular body). They gain further enhancement by participating in the very good extra-curricular activities which include junior and senior choirs, a first rate wind band, a really funky jazz group and a steel pans orchestra specialising in catchy calypso tunes and rhythms.

169. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average. Students achieve above average standards in performing and composing music for GCSE and predicted grades are high. Knowledge and understanding of representative composers, works and styles and aural recognition of typical musical effects and features are thorough. ICT is used effectively to develop and record compositions and performances.

170. The quality of teaching is consistently good at all stages. Teachers have very good musical knowledge and skills, and are very good at teaching basic skills, especially aural skills. Planning and methods are good and expectations are high. Students are well managed and there are good procedures for assessment which are conscientiously carried out. Higher achieving students are not always sufficiently stretched so as to achieve their full potential. The quality of learning is good at all stages. Students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding of music well, and make good intellectual and creative efforts, for example four students from GCSE classes worked with a teacher to play Cuban street music on conga drums. The piece – a rumba entitled 'Gua Gua Nco' – demanded long periods of disciplined and concentrated work to produce the good performance they eventually achieved. A Year 7 class worked hard to find and learn, on tuned percussion instruments the notes of the piece 'Arriba' which after some practice they played well. Students with special educational needs learn well. One such student participated in a group which included a student identified as talented and made a full contribution to the group composition and performance which emerged. Students with English as an additional language are enabled to participate well. Underpinning this good picture are the very good behaviour and attitudes apparent throughout the inspection. Students develop very good habits of independent learning and appear to thoroughly enjoy their music lessons. A splendid example of this came in a rehearsal of the junior choir, where the students performed 'You can count on me' with absolutely joyous and captivating abandon and enthusiasm.

171. The previous report did not refer to standards in music. However teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show an improving trend over two years; GCSE results over the past two years show the proportion of students obtaining A*-C grades is also improving. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- An excellent match of staff to the subject's needs promotes good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management contribute to high standards.
- Curriculum opportunities and extra-curricular sport are very good with excellent practical facilities that support learning well.

Area for improvement

- A specialised classroom for GCSE theory would help to provide more opportunity to use ICT resources and to extend the variety of teaching methods.

172. In 2002, teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 as below average with less than half of all students reaching the national average. Standards in the present Year 9 are below average but improving rapidly because of increased staffing and improved accommodation. Only two students were entered and achieved A*-C grades for the full GCSE course in 2002. Over half of the students entered for the short course achieved A*-C grades. Work scrutiny and observations in Year 11 show that the mixed ability group is at an average standard. The impetus towards a full GCSE option has begun in Year 10 where 28 students are studying the subject. From the evidence in Year 9 this number could well be doubled by September 2004. Lower attaining students achieve to their potential because courses are well matched to students' abilities. All Year 11 students receive certification, appropriate to their level, at the end of the course. Talented students develop their expertise through the very good extra-curricular opportunities and inter-school fixtures. Students achieve well throughout the school.

173. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 9, standards are below average in gymnastics and games. The lack of previous experience affects the acquisition of ball skills in games and sequence work in gymnastics. The standard of dance is above average in the stimulating teaching environment. Dance is a real strength because of the enthusiasm generated by both the students and the teacher. In hockey, students show an understanding of the basic strokes and are beginning to perform average passing techniques. Basketball dribbling and passing skills are progressing and a few students can master these skills in a small team game. The benefits of the extra accommodation and staffing are beginning to improve standards in Years 7-9.

174. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 11, overall standards are average. Theory work in Year 11 is average but the number entering the full course is low. However, in Year 10, the GCSE course is more popular and the standard is rising. Students' standards in core physical education are average. In a basketball session, Year 11 students worked hard on their dribbling skills and were beginning to understand strategies in possession practices. Teachers are introducing Year 10 students to trampolining and they are effectively developing basic bounces. Quality sequences are being produced in the dance section of the GNVQ performing arts course. The Year 10 GCSE group show average skills in their practical rounders sessions. Their throwing and catching ability is good and their speed of movement is helping standards to improve in the game situation. Students of all abilities achieve well throughout Years 10 and 11 because of the excellent facilities and the benefits of the improved staffing ratio.

175. Attitudes to the subject are very good overall; students respect and enjoy the new facilities. Students co-operate with each other in lessons and work independently when the opportunity is provided. Personal development and relationships are excellent and have a

positive effect on learning. Students are able to concentrate and focus on developing their basic skills in games and creative skills in dance. The demand for extra-curricular activities such as basketball, netball, football, dance, and hockey reflects a growing enthusiasm towards the subject. Overall, students' attitudes have a positive effect on learning and disruptions to lessons are rare.

176. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show an in-depth knowledge of the subject and their planning and preparation for lessons are outstanding. Class management is very good and objectives are presented clearly at the beginning of every lesson. The teaching of dance is particularly strong in providing the stimulus for students to develop high quality, expressive sequences of movement. Excellent teaching was also observed in rounders where the strong feature was the timing of the teacher interventions. Constructive evaluations at the end of each lesson reinforce learning and contribute to teachers' planning of subsequent lessons. The GCSE course is well taught and will develop further when ICT is more readily accessible. Lower attaining students are given opportunities to progress through the appropriate matching of tasks to ability and effective teacher support. The teachers in the department work hard, have excellent relationships with students and show enthusiasm in the extra-curricular programme where demand from students is high.

177. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the breadth and balance of activities is very good. Mainly, the expressive arts department covers dance. Teachers offer clubs and team practices in the very good extra-curricular programme and over a third of the school population attend the sessions with nine staff organising the activities. Assessment procedures are very good and meet the criteria set in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Leadership and management are very good and documentation has been clearly presented and acted upon. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and the sharing of teaching expertise with all the staff are excellent. The accommodation is excellent and promotes progress because of the learning opportunities available. With the addition of two very able newly qualified teachers, the match of staffing to the needs of the subject is excellent. The department has made very good improvement since the addition of new facilities and staff.

Dance

178. Standards are above average. Year 9 classes show concentration and expression in their sequence work and the quality and control of movements is very good. The stimuli used have a strong influence on performance and there are links with literacy through poetry, art and design through paintings, citizenship through discussion on equal rights and music. Lessons are well prepared and excellently taught making very effective use of resources. Students learn very well by being involved at an emotional and spiritual level.

179. A Year 10 class taking part in dance as part of the new GNVQ course in performing arts made very good progress mainly because of the very enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching. The teaching is very effective in producing high quality work and the standard is above average. Very good teaching contributes to other areas of the curriculum including citizenship, literacy and art and design.

180. The accommodation is very good and the thoughtful displays around the room are conducive to students' learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching which employs a stimulating range of activities to enhance students' learning.
- Outstanding results on the GCSE short course, achieving grades that are well above average.
- Highly effective management of the subject and leadership of the teaching team.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Years 7 and 8 is limited in scope and the criteria for assessing work are not sufficiently explicit to students.

181. Standards in religious education are above average overall. Many students come from a faith background but their academic attainment in the subject is below average on entry to the school. They make good progress and reach average standards by the end of Year 9. Their progress accelerates on the GCSE short course, where the results are now well above average. Over the last three years, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C has increased by eleven percentage points each year. In 2002 three quarters of the 234 candidates achieved the higher grades.

182. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Year 9 standards are average overall, which represents good achievement by students over the three years. They have a good knowledge of the main beliefs and practices in Christianity and Islam, and are familiar with certain aspects of four other major religions. The extra time allocated to the subject in Years 7 and 8 allows an early start to be made on the GCSE course in Year 9. Students are making good progress, keeping thorough, well presented notes of their work. Higher attainers are producing a good standard of essay writing, explaining religious teaching on moral issues and forming their own considered opinions. The use of guides for writing is helping lower attainers to plan written work and the regular opportunity for discussion develops their understanding of issues. In lessons seen, there was good involvement by all students in role plays of situations illustrating prejudice and discrimination and stereotyping of gender roles. Students were able to articulate their views and respond to those expressed by others. Students mix well together in lesson activities and there is no significant difference in attainment by different ethnic groups. Students for whom English is an additional language are helped in their language development by teachers' emphasis on speaking and listening.

183. In work seen during the inspection in Year 11, standards are well above average on the GCSE short course studied by all and on the full course, taken by a small group of students. Students' achievement over the two years is very good. A high standard of presentation and coverage of topics is evident in their note books. The well-structured approach to teaching the course, with its accent on equipping students with an effective examination technique, is enabling them to do well. Higher attainers show very good understanding in their evaluation of moral stances on issues such as abortion and an ability for rational examination of arguments advanced for and against the existence of God. Lower attainers benefit particularly from the use of ICT to support their learning. For example, in an excellent lesson on reasons for and against belief in God, PowerPoint presentations of students' work were used expertly by the teacher to consolidate their understanding of the arguments and apply them directly to answering an examination question. Students are highly motivated and make good use of homework assignments to research topics and develop their essay style.

184. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive across the school. They enjoy the variety of activities in lessons and co-operate fully in role plays and meditative exercises, such as reflecting on their own special places in Year 7, as a link to understanding the importance of places of worship for believers. The multi-faith composition of classes produces a healthy respect for each other's beliefs and an interest in learning about them. They work well together in small groups and are confident about presenting impromptu drama, for example, illustrating conflict situations in a Year 11 lesson. Students are keen to express their views in discussion of moral issues, such as the Year 10 lesson debates on the difference between sin and crime. Behaviour in classes is very good, the result of positive working relationships and purposeful management of students to keep them focused on tasks.

185. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. The subject is taught by specialist teachers, who are highly skilled at communicating religious ideas at the right level for their students, relating them to students' experience and providing appropriate intellectual challenge. In one lesson, Year 7 students were able to understand something of the Buddhist idea of enlightenment from the analogy of the lotus flower and identify characteristics of a spiritual person. There is very good development of students' spiritual awareness through activities that promote reflection and meditation on the application of what they are learning for their own lives. The teaching is also highly effective in driving up standards on the GCSE courses by practising examination technique on a regular basis and giving students detailed feedback on essays, showing them how to improve. The wide variety of learning styles employed, with an accent on student participation through discussion and group work, is particularly effective at developing students' literacy, giving ample opportunity to talk through ideas before writing them down. Access to computers is a problem, but when they are available, they are used most effectively to support students' learning, especially in the two Year 11 classes that are taught in the ICT room. All the lessons observed were well planned with clear objectives that were stated at the outset, exemplified in the lesson activities and carefully reviewed at the end. This purposeful approach to lessons ensured at least good progress or better in almost all lessons.

186. Leadership and management of the department are very good, successfully rebuilding the teaching team after a turnover of staff in 2001 and achieving record GCSE results the following year. Excellent teamwork is producing a stimulating professional exchange of ideas for continuing to improve teaching and learning. As a result, the bank of teacher-produced learning materials is growing but the textbook stock to support the new schemes of work for Years 7 and 8 is not sufficient in quality or number, nor is there an adequate supply of reference books in the library. In its development planning, the department has rightly identified the opportunity to enhance the curriculum by making greater use of the local community for fieldwork and visiting speakers.

187. There has been good improvement in the subject since the previous inspection, as standards have risen appreciably to become the best in the school. The department is now wholly staffed by specialist teachers and is expanding its work in the sixth form. Assessment has improved and is now very good on the GCSE courses but only satisfactory in Years 7-9, where it is limited to tests at the end of units of work and the criteria for assessing work are not clearly communicated to students. Balanced teaching of religious beliefs and their relevance to the lives of students is making a big contribution to students' personal development throughout the school. Similarly, the study of religion and society in Years 9 and 10 promotes their citizenship education. The school is well served by this creative and highly successful department.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well as a result of high quality teaching.
- Students' enjoyment of the work raises their confidence and contribute to their learning.
- Management and coordination of vocational education contributes to the school's specialist status.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities to share good practice more widely across the school.

188. Health and social care and business education have recently been introduced in Years 10 and 11 in order to enhance the qualifications available to students at this stage and support retention of students to the sixth form. Standards in the two areas are high. GNVQ results in 2002 were above the national average. In relation to all other subjects, students' performance in GNVQ examinations was significantly better. Students respond well to the different methods of teaching and learning and the relevance of issues such as child care, business management and the use of ICT skills. Examination success indicates that the course is meeting most students' needs.

189. Achievement and progress are very good in relation to students' prior learning. Very good assessment techniques involve students in monitoring their own progress across units, mentored, supported and tested regularly by teachers. In a Year 10 health and social care lesson, students investigated integrated care centres for the elderly. They brainstormed the design of a centre in a short time - resulting in a buzz of discussion about the PIES (Physical, Intellectual Emotional and Social development) they relate to in all coursework. - and fed their innovative ideas back to the group, consolidating thinking and planning skills. This type of collaboration has a very positive impact on students taking responsibility for their learning. Students enjoy the courses. Their commitment results in highly effective learning.

190. Teaching and learning are very good, and some is excellent, across the GNVQ subjects of health and social care and business. Teaching involves, challenges and engages students as partners in their learning. For example, the business group studying communication made a visit to a range of departments in the school. All personnel had been fully briefed by the teacher and the students were able to put their learning into the context of the real world of communication they use every day. Students drive their standards up because they know how to make decisions about personal improvement and produce their own action plan for study. When asked their views, students often spoke about their enjoyment of the courses and how working in this style has raised their personal confidence and self esteem and in turn improved their learning.

191. Management and coordination of vocational areas of the curriculum are very good and raise the subjects' contribution to the school's specialist business and enterprise status. Leadership and management enable all subject leaders to take responsibility for their areas. Resources are developing well in individual subjects but there are too few opportunities to share good practice more widely in the school.

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

In the inspection, 14 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 2002

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 | 26 | 65 | * | 15 | * | 1.7 | * |
| Chemistry | 19 | 95 | * | 21 | * | 2.4 | * |
| Biology | 24 | 100 | * | 17 | * | 2.3 | * |
| Physics | 5 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 2.4 | * |
| Business Studies | 6 | 83 | * | 17 | * | 2.5 | * |
| Information and communication technology | 10 | 80 | * | 10 | * | 2.5 | * |
| Art | 6 | 83 | * | 0 | * | 0.8 | * |
| Media studies | 3 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 1.7 | * |
| Sociology | 14 | 93 | * | 43 | * | 2.6 | * |
| Psychology | 22 | 91 | * | 18 | * | 2.3 | * |
| English language | 7 | 86 | * | 0 | * | 1.7 | * |
| English literature | 4 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 2.5 | * |
| Critical thinking | 12 | 75 | * | 8 | * | 1.6 | * |
| Urdu | 5 | 80 | * | 40 | * | 2.8 | * |

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available

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 | 6 | 100 | * | 33 | * | 5.6 | * |
| Chemistry | 16 | 81 | * | 19 | * | 4.1 | * |
| Biology | 19 | 79 | * | 5 | * | 4.0 | * |
| Business studies | 4 | 100 | * | 25 | * | 6.0 | * |
| Business V double | 7 | 100 | * | 21 | * | 11.2 | * |
| Business V single | 25 | 76 | * | 4 | * | 3.1 | * |
| ICT | 5 | 100 | * | 20 | * | 6.0 | * |
| Health and social care | 11 | 82 | * | 0 | * | 2.4 | * |
| Health and social care V double | 4 | 100 | * | 13 | * | 10.0 | * |
| Art | 8 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 4.0 | * |
| Media studies | 4 | 100 | * | 25 | * | 6.0 | * |
| Religious education | 1 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 4.0 | * |
| Sociology | 8 | 100 | * | 25 | * | 5.5 | * |
| Psychology | 13 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 3.9 | * |
| English language | 6 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 3.7 | * |
| English literature | 4 | 100 | * | 0 | * | 3.0 | * |
| Urdu | 8 | 100 | * | 100 | * | 9.0 | * |

Intermediate vocational qualifications

| Qualification | No in final year | % gaining qualification | | % gaining merit | | % gaining distinction | |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Business | 13 | 100 | * | 62 | * | 0 | * |
| ICT | 21 | 90 | * | 24 | * | 33.0 | * |

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry but physics was also sampled. There were no students taking GCE A level physics in 2001 and 2002. Five students took the GCE AS level examination in physics in 2002. All gained at least a grade E. Students in Years 12 and 13 are achieving at expected levels in relation to their prior attainment but below course requirements. Two lessons were observed, both of which were good. Year 12 students interpreted heating and cooling curves and as a result of clear exposition by the teacher gained much new knowledge and understanding of particle behaviour. By the end of the lesson Year 13 students competently drew ray diagrams and used them to determine the nature and size of the image produced by a convex lens.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good; teachers' very good subject knowledge results in clear explanations of new skills and concepts.
- The students' very positive attitudes help them to achieve well.
- Teachers involve students well in discussions so that they understand better the topics being taught.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of new technology to help students learn.

192. In 2001, the GCE A level examination results were average. The results represented good achievement in relation to students' attainment at the start of the course. In 2002, results were similar. All 6 students were successful. In the 2002 AS level results 26 students completed the course and about two-thirds were successful. Some students began the course with modest GCSE results and most achieved at least as well as they should have done.

193. The standards of current Year 13 students are average. Standards match those of the previous year. The number of students taking the course is much higher than in previous years. Results in the modules taken so far suggest that a high proportion of these students is on track for successful completion. In pure mathematics, students are developing well their understanding of using the Binomial Expansion to simplify expressions. In mechanics, they understand how to use forces in problems dealing with motion of bodies. In statistics, they have a good understanding of the processes involved in significance testing. Overall, students' achievement is good. They are making good progress in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. This comes about as a result of very good teaching and the very positive attitudes of students.

194. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are carefully planned and the objectives of the course are well met. Lessons are well structured; they provide appropriate levels of challenge and a variety of methods to help students learn. For example, in a very good lesson, the teacher used the students to demonstrate and explain to others their solutions to questions. This allowed students to identify errors and see how their solutions could be improved. However, new technology is not used often enough to support students' learning. Teachers' very good knowledge of mathematics is shown in their

questioning and explanations and in the tasks set. They explain clearly so that students understand new skills and concepts. Students show very positive attitudes and work hard to cope with the demands of the subject. They make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing. As a result, students' learning is very good in lessons. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. Students' progress is well monitored as they move through the sixth form.

195. The available staffing is well deployed and there is a clear commitment to ensuring that students achieve as well as possible. The scheme of work effectively reflects the subject requirements, and sets the stage for very good teaching. Sixth form mathematics provision was not reported on in the previous inspection, but the evidence indicates that leadership and management have been effective in maintaining standards since then.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and facilitates learning.
- Assessment, monitoring and target setting are good so that students are aware of their progress.
- Students are well motivated and this contributes to their good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the number of passes at the higher grades.
- Existing resources, particularly in relation to textbooks and larger equipment, are not adequate to meet the needs of an expanding subject.

196. A level results in 2001 were average overall, although the number of students obtaining the higher grades was below average, and there were only eight candidates. These results were better than those for the year 2002 when there were more candidates. In the year 2002 all students achieved a pass at AS level, which was an improvement on the year 2001.

197. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, and these standards are achieved because of good teaching. In relation to their standards at the start of the sixth form the achievement of students is good. Their positive attitudes mean that the quality of learning is good, and students make good progress as they move through the sixth form.

198. Students in Year 13 make good progress in lessons and are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. They are able to describe the stages of photosynthesis and respiration and their importance to living organisms. They have a clear understanding of the importance of microbiology to human beings and can describe the processes of aseptic techniques. Students in Year 12 have a clear understanding of the basic principles of genetics and inheritance and are able to explain the causes and effects of genetic mutations. Evidence from written work shows that these students are able to describe the fine structure of cells and the functions of minute cell organelles.

199. Teaching in biology is good overall, enabling students to learn well. Teachers show very good subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of facts and promote the confidence of the students. They display an enthusiasm for the subject, which is passed on to the students. Lessons are well planned, have a brisk pace and include a variety of teaching and learning styles to maintain students' interest. Reviews at the end of each

lesson help to consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other. Teachers' expectations are high and they question students frequently during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding. ICT is used on a regular basis either in experimental work or for personal research, and the setting of mini research projects, the results of which the students subsequently report to their peers, fosters independent learning skills. Teachers take care to promote the literacy skills of students by emphasising relevant terminology. There are pleasant working relationships between teachers and students during lessons so that students feel able to ask questions if they need to. Marking of students' written work is thorough and conforms to the school marking policy. It is appropriately annotated, giving clear guidance on areas for improvement, with good use of praise and encouragement. Assessment takes place through regular testing during and at the end of work modules, and targets are regularly reviewed so that students are always aware of their progress. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons, often comprising past examination questions. Teachers make good use of external facilities such as the local universities and industries, which helps to motivate students.

200. Students learn well and make good progress in lessons because of the good teaching, and also because they are mature and highly motivated. Many of them need to do well in biology because of their career aspirations, which further motivates them. They respond well in lessons and rise to challenges as shown during question and answer sessions and are keen to contribute to class discussions. They work co-operatively together in lessons and help each other and share ideas in a mature and sensible way. Retention rates are good.

201. The department is led and managed well and there is a good team ethos among the staff who support each other and share information and expertise. All teachers are biology specialists enabling them to deliver lessons with confidence. There is a clear sense of direction and staff are committed to the continued achievement of good examination results, in particular an increase in the number of passes at the higher grades. Monitoring of staff takes place through lesson observations and informal discussions. Regular meetings take place to review progress and monitor internal assessment procedures. Assessment and record keeping are good. Accommodation is good, and the displays around the department are informative and aid learning. Resources are good, although larger pieces of apparatus are due to be replaced and an increase in student numbers means that more textbooks will need to be purchased in order to continue the current practice of providing each student with a textbook.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Numbers taking the subject are increasing rapidly and most students are achieving at least as well as they should in line in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The progress of students is very carefully monitored and much extra help is given out of lessons. These supportive measures contribute to students' progress.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- A small but significant number of students do not attend regularly and their progress is adversely affected.

- Students are not provided with textbooks for use at home and the range of textbooks available in the library is very limited so that independent learning is hindered.

202. Sixteen students took the GCE A level examinations in 2002. One fifth gained a grade A and four fifths gained at least a grade E. The results were similar overall to those obtained by the five students in 2001 when results were below the national average. All except one of the nineteen students taking the GCE AS level examination in 2002 gained at least a grade E. In both the A and AS level examinations in 2002 most students gained at least the grade expected in relation to their prior attainment.

203. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are below average. Most students are achieving well when their prior attainment is considered. Effective teaching in a double lesson for Year 12 students enabled them to perform sophisticated calculations (on lattice enthalpies) by the end. The teacher carefully emphasised the methodical stepwise approach required for success in understanding the concept. Most Year 12 students accurately describe types of bonding but are not always able to predict bond angles. Higher attaining students have a most secure understanding of ionisation energies. Lower attaining students understand activation energy but have difficulties handling some technical terms.

204. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and make it comprehensible in a lively and informative manner. Questioning is usually skilful but occasionally teachers do not always target questions sufficiently to draw out information and check understanding. The pace of lessons is appropriate for the groups and time is used effectively. Much effective use is made of previous examination questions in successfully developing examination techniques. Students' work is marked regularly and conscientiously. Comments identify weaknesses and suggest ways to improve. Teachers also know each student extremely well and establish relationships based on genuine mutual respect. This promotes confidence and eagerness to fulfil the teachers' high expectations. Very good relationships also give students confidence to seek extra help from the teacher. Students much appreciate the extra time willingly given by teachers out of lessons, which helps them move forward. As a result of the quality of teaching students learn well and make good progress.

205. Most students have very positive attitudes to learning. Interest and concentration levels are always high. They confidently respond and put forward ideas and ask questions. They co-operate very well in groups and help each other. They carefully use apparatus and observe the necessary safety precautions well. Their files and course notes are well organised. However, a small but significant number of mainly Year 13 students do not attend regularly and their progress is adversely affected.

206. Although the co-ordinator of chemistry was absent due to ill health during the inspection, it is clear that the subject is very well led and managed. Teachers are well qualified, deployed effectively, and monitored and supported well. Much professional development is taking place. The technicians work hard and provide high quality support. The assessment procedures are thorough and comprehensive. The information is used very well and effectively to set targets for individuals. Progress of students is very carefully monitored. The quality of the accommodation ranges from satisfactory to good. Although resources are sufficient in most respects, students are not provided with texts for use at home and there is a very restricted range of texts available in the library. These limitations have an adverse effect on development of independent learning skills.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was the course leading to AVCE qualification in business studies.

Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- High quality teaching team that has very good relationships with students.
- Very effective assessment strategies lead to consistent improvement.
- Excellent community links are integrated into teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Explore the opportunities for courses that meet the needs of lower attaining students.

207. Standards in AVCE business studies are above average. Students have been obtaining some of the best results in the school at this level, representing very good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Take-up for the course is affected by the number of students who transfer to other local colleges after GCSE and by the lack of suitable courses for lower attaining students. Nevertheless, numbers entering for the examination are rising: this year there are 16 students in Year 13.

208. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of work, discussion with students and exploration of work indicates that achievement is good. Year 13 students were making particularly good progress lesson by lesson as they tackled a case study of an international company. Students effectively consolidated their research by reporting back to their peers about the company. In addition, their thinking was challenged because they debated different views and considered how opinions might be biased by financial influences. The students challenged any area they did not understand, and thus further consolidated learning through discussion. The group then benefited from a different learning approach: they received very good teaching relating to the social costs and benefits of business development. These two complementary methods of teaching provided diversity in learning and good results. Students have good ICT skills and use them and the resources of the Internet effectively to investigate company practice.

209. Teaching and learning are very good with twenty per cent of lessons being excellent. The large team of eight teachers has a broad range of qualifications and experience in the business world and a creative approach, all of which have a very good impact on learning. Planning is exemplary and employs a wide range of teaching and learning skills. Teachers set high standards that inspire students, including a business dress code, rigorous marking that demands students reach their full potential and clear expectation of hard work and meeting deadlines. These help students to organise their work and comply with business requirements. Teachers use assessment techniques very well and make them a key feature of learning. Peer assessment, teacher assessment and self-assessment provide a bank of information so students can improve on past performance. Effective personal action planning is a further technique that enables students to become independent, self-motivated learners. Interview techniques practised by a small group of Year 12 in a formal interview situation illustrated the power of this battery of assessment. Students were very analytical in their review of each interviewee, and the tension and excitement of the session, because of students' commitment and practice, made the formal interview a powerful learning tool. Students are also encouraged to use the video camera and power point presentations to monitor and record their learning so improvement can be made.

210. Management is very good. The teaching team is enthusiastic and led well. The department is housed in a suite of rooms that, along with the BEC partnership, ensures it has a pivotal role in the school's specialist status - one teacher is the BEC co-ordinator. Resources support learning very well and have been built up by the department to enable sharing and consistency of presentation, thus reinforcing consistent expectations and high standards. The department has a well-deserved reputation for quality business practices.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was on information and communication technology.

Information and communication technology

Overall, provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching results in good learning through high expectations, pace of lessons, and variety of activities.
- The range of courses offered benefits students' different needs.
- The growth of productive links with organisations outside the school

Areas for improvement

- The match between class sizes and numbers of machines in the ICT rooms.
- Standards of attainment in GNVQ courses.

211. There is a good choice of courses in the sixth form, but because they are generally new to the school, it is not yet possible to see trends in the results, and numbers have been small. In 2002, eight of the ten AS level students assessed at the end of Year 12 reached or exceeded the target level of grade E, with one obtaining a top grade. In the full advanced courses the same year, all five students who entered passed, with one reaching a top grade: this is slightly above the national average. In the GNVQ courses nearly two-thirds of the students passed at Foundation Level, half of those achieving a merit; nearly all passed at Intermediate Level, with a quarter achieving a merit and a third a distinction – in both cases the school's results were close to national averages.

212. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards of attainment are average overall. Those following Advanced level have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, even if (as quite a few do) they begin Year 12 with lower than average experience of IT. Those starting the sixth form GNVQ courses often have much less experience and understanding than expected and not all catch up to reach national averages. Few students are able to use a word processor with flair and accuracy – indeed some have problems correcting errors efficiently and quite a few do not even recognise errors. While most girls have no problems logging onto the Internet and digging up relevant information, they generally do not find it easy to focus their research and to select the most important points. When researching Internet service providers (ISPs), for instance, the members of a Year 12 class (while working with interest and reasonable motivation) had little idea how many ISPs there might be, couldn't focus on this country only, and were beginning to be overwhelmed with information from which they couldn't select. Overall, the sixth form GNVQ students' standards in IT are below national averages; even so, the levels of achievement of most of the sixth formers are satisfactory compared with their standards on entry.

213. The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons are thoroughly planned, and there is widespread use of very well focussed learning objectives that meet the needs of groups of students within the classes. Most lessons move at a rapid pace, often even when the

students are working on their own - and it is common for teachers to use a great range of activities and resources including growing use of the school's studios and outside organisations. Homework tasks are often very good too, and the methods the teachers have for assessing learning and discussing what they find with the students are good also. In some lessons, teaching can be better than the students' learning; this tends to be in GNVQ courses, where the students often find ideas hard to grasp, whatever the teacher tries to do. Nevertheless, motivation and concentration are usually satisfactory and behaviour is good.

214. Leadership and management of the subject are effective, and though there was little mention of ICT in the previous report, there has been good improvement overall since that time. One area for improvement is that there are not enough computers for everyone in some classes in the sixth form, making it difficult for all individuals to develop their skills and understanding and for teachers to assess progress regularly.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Subjects in this curriculum area were not a focus for this inspection, but a lesson in the course leading to the community sports leadership qualification was sampled. The teacher effectively used other students from the school as the 'taught group' and prepared the 'trainee' students well. They learned well from the teacher's good evaluation of the activities and relevant 'homework' was set to reinforce that learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus for the inspection was on the AVCE course in health and social care. The school also provides a selection of very successful courses at sixth form level relating to applied social sciences. Students have the option of completing a certificate in childcare, a diploma in childcare or a classroom assistant's qualification, which also serves adults from primary schools across the city. A lesson in the latter course was sampled, and excellent teaching and learning took place. The teaching was of high quality and students were benefiting from excellent support and making considerable gains in confidence and self-esteem.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Inspired teaching and effective learning.
- High standards of work including presentation and accuracy are a result of very good marking and feedback to students.
- A well planned work placement programme.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation restricts flexible room layout, and access to resources.

215. Health and social care vocational courses were inspected at intermediate level for Year 12 and advanced level for Year 13. These vocational courses are very popular and successful. In three years student numbers for the advanced level course in Year 13 have risen from three candidates to ten and for the intermediate level course in Year 12 from 47 to 66. All students passed in 2002, and achieved very well to do so given their low attainment on entry to the course.

216. Current Year 13 students' standards of work are above average and their achievement is very good in relation to their prior learning. Many students have literacy difficulties but carefully planned, wide ranging teaching ensures this issue is tackled effectively. Complex issues related to health and well being are taught in a very 'hands-on' style, facts are repeated and information is presented in a practical way to underpin knowledge and help to reinforce understanding. For example Year 13 spent time examining the most suitable research methods in different care situations. Lively debate and challenging discussion with the teacher showed students' understanding of qualitative and quantitative research; they investigated ethical issues related to research, which challenged their personal assumptions. Finally students clarified their knowledge with group work and feedback to the class resulting from working on mini case studies. An emphasis on key skills ensures students develop a mature and independent approach to their studies.

217. In Year 12 students are confident and knowledgeable. They explore difficult concepts of values and beliefs in dealing with people in stressful care situations. Students have gained analytical skills and the ability to use those skills in well-reasoned discussion. Students are enjoying the course and have high aspirations; many wish to pursue their studies through to university. Visual materials, visits from health professionals and the effective use of community placements open students' minds and support their learning, and enable cultural perspectives to be shared.

218. Teaching is very good overall and much of it is excellent. Teachers' passion for the subject plus well-researched and up-to-date personal expertise contributes greatly to students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers come from a range of health and education backgrounds that provides excellent support for students' development. Students are fully involved by a wide range of teaching and learning approaches. Teachers encourage student participation in lessons, thus ensuring concepts are embedded and confidence is maintained. For example, Year 12 students were asked to use role-play to investigate the way groups work. They used an observed session, in role, relating to a care plan for an elder in a family. High expectations inspired students' intellectual growth and independence. Teachers give very good feedback on written work, ensure students set themselves rigorous future targets, and encourage them to compare their standards with the performance criterion for each level of attainment. Personal development is excellent and students work in groups to explore ideas and present information to their peers. Teachers are very good communicators and challenge students by demanding productive independent action that leads to developing effective life long learning skills. They make very good use of external opportunities for placement and work experience that supports the development of the individual student. ICT is used well to record information and present of units of work.

219. Leadership and management are excellent because of the integration of the team's strengths, including a new member of the department with a community language who can give additional support to those at an early stage of learning English. The foundation level course is becoming established in Years 10 and 11, providing natural progression into the sixth form. Although most teaching takes place in the sixth form block, there is no effective base room for the subject. Teaching rooms are too small to cope with expanding numbers and restrict development of the already very good range of teaching and learning styles and students' further development.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and media studies.

Art and design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers and students enjoy good relationships and students benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- Students share ideas freely and work well together.

Areas for improvement:

- Students do not have sufficient opportunities for both two- and three-dimensional work on a large scale, so their skills are not sufficiently developed.
- Accommodation and resources are not yet adequate to meet course requirements, students' study needs and the department's potential for growth.

220. In 2002 A2 examinations student results were well below the national average. All students entered gained a grade in the range A-E but no student gained A or B grades. The AS results showed 80 per cent gaining a grade in the range A–E. In relation to their GCSE grades most did as well as expected. The AS level examination results provide a satisfactory foundation for A2 study. However retention rate of students into the second year is poor. Recent results shows that standards are rising.

221. The work of current students is average with Year 12 showing the potential for an upward trend. The quality of work in students' portfolios and sketchbooks confirms these standards. Students speak with confidence about their work and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Achievement is satisfactory and portfolios show that most students have carried out thoughtful investigation and some creative exploration of ideas. Students display some ability and understanding of ICT in their assignment work. Work in sketchbooks shows some good annotation and an understanding of compositional principles and techniques needed for project development. Students' preliminary sketches show an understanding of design principles, but development into finished design is inconsistent. An opportunity to develop work in both two and three dimensions on a larger scale would develop skills further. Initially in Year 12, students sustain much of their interest and skill from their GCSE work. This was evident in a lesson based on direct observation drawing, where students' used mixed media successfully and included historical references in their work. Judgements on proportions and spatial layout were good and students were eager to discuss their coursework and success in the GCSE examination. In a Year 13 lesson, students showed some technical knowledge and satisfactory skill in drawing and painting, but rarely this was applied to work on a larger scale. Some sharing of ideas and opinions on the influence of styles, genres and approaches to their own work and the work of other artists were evident.

222. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The four art and design teachers have good subject knowledge and technical skill. Many students speak well of the support provided by teachers. Project briefs are well designed and students are informed of how work can be improved. Teachers' expectations and the pace of lessons are satisfactory. In the best lessons students are set work that challenges them and to which they respond with enthusiasm. Teachers give appropriate attention to presentation skills and monitor students' work thoroughly. A greater variety of methods to build progressively on students' knowledge

would give them confidence to undertake more demanding tasks. Students' knowledge is extended with visits to galleries that include aspects of contemporary practice.

223. The quality of leadership and management is good. The newly appointed head of department is ensuring communications between teachers are effective. Assessment criteria are well defined and deadlines for the completion of work are made clear. The present accommodation, although improved with recent ICT facilities, is still inadequate for courses with such a range of media choice and hence inhibits further potential expansion. Facilities and provision for work using clay are insufficient for the development of students' three-dimensional skills. The library provision for good quality reference books is insufficient and does not meet fully the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base. The teachers understand developments in higher education and vocational routes in art and design. Students have good career advice. With stability of staff and a consistent approach to raising standards, this department has the potential to be a more successful area of the sixth form provision.

Media studies

Overall, the quality of provision in media studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Committed and enthusiastic teaching provides good support for students and helps them to achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes that contribute to their good learning.
- The subject is developing in popularity because it is led and managed very well.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not yet confident in the use of media technical language and this holds down their standards of attainment.
- The limited opportunities for practical media work and for expansion to meet demand constrain more rapid development of the subject.

224. This is a relatively new subject for study in the sixth form. The first students who took their examinations last year at A2 level obtained grades that showed good achievement in relation to predicted results. Two of the four students entered achieved grades that were two grades higher than anticipated and two one grade higher. Although the requirement for entry to the sixth form is five or more passes at GCSE at grade C or above, some of the present students do not meet that criterion and none have studied media studies previously at GCSE level. Currently there are three students in Year 13 and eight in Year 12.

225. In the work seen during the inspection, in class and in folders, the students' attainment is below expectations, but students are achieving at least as well as should be expected in relation to their prior attainment. They make good progress in lessons. Most have begun to acquire knowledge of media concepts but are not yet confident in the use of media technical language. They are able to discuss how audiences are catered for and how the industry targets sectors of society through merchandising and advertising. In classes seen students participated well in discussion. A Year 12 group studying how cinema audiences are targeted by the printed media fed back with confidence their findings, showing clear understanding of how the industries inter-relate. In a Year 13 group students could describe the features which signified aspects of particular genres and identified the genre of different films from a series of 'trailers'.

226. Students' attitudes are very positive. The small groups worked well together and made relevant and positive contributions in discussion. The work in folders is carefully documented and shows a conscientious approach to study.

227. Teaching is good. The teacher provides a secure base for discussion and respects students' efforts, ensuring that all participate in discussion. Lessons are carefully prepared and resources used well. The expectations of the teacher are high and students respond well to the stimulus provided. Media language is used and explained, reinforcing the need to use the correct terminology. The handouts prepared by the teacher and the references provided give students clear guidance on research and also in gaining knowledge of media concepts. Work is carefully assessed and comments are supportive and encouraging. Literacy skills are reinforced and there are good opportunities to use ICT as the media base has computer facilities. Independent study is developing well.

228. The present facilities are adequate for the relatively small number of students involved in the sixth form and the main school. However, use of editing facilities for practical work has to be booked and there is only one room designated specifically for media studies at present. There is evidence of real growth in the number of students taking media studies in Years 10 and 11 and choosing to continue the subject into the sixth form, and it is recognised that existing resources could be inadequate for the future.

229. The leadership and management of the area are very good. The subject leader is well organised, conscientious and hardworking. Schemes of work are detailed and the action plan recognises development needed in the area. In addition to sixth form provision there are now examination classes in Years 10 and 11 and a 'Media month' was organised in 2002 for Year 8 students which involved several other areas of the curriculum. Visits are organised to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the media. The school has radio and television stations that broadcast regularly and media students are encouraged to be involved.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on religious studies, sociology and psychology.

Religious studies

Overall, the quality of provision in religious studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers cover all aspects of the course with equal proficiency and students benefit from their wide-ranging approach. Their planning and teaching of good lessons result in good learning.
- Good use is made of ICT to enhance learning.
- Students' response is good. Students have positive attitudes towards religious education.
- Management and leadership of the department are effective and efficient.

Areas for improvement

- Standards attained by students are below national expectations.
- Students do not read sufficiently widely or deeply to enhance their knowledge.
- Resources, including textbooks, videos and visits are insufficient to strengthen students' examination techniques and retention skills.

230. In the A level examinations in 2002, one student entered and attained a grade D. In 2001, three students entered and 1 attained a grade E, the other two students attained grade N. There are currently no A2 students. At AS level, there were no candidates in 2002. In 2001, two students entered and both attained grade D. The small numbers of entrants to the examinations makes comparisons with national statistics unreliable. However, there is a growing interest in the subject and the current AS group in Year 12 has seventeen on roll.

231. Standards attained by current Year 12 students as seen in their lessons and in their portfolios of work are below national expectations. In their studies of world religions, the strength of the students' class work is in the steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files, and in their basic understanding of the subject matter. Some students, however, lack confidence when dealing with the complexities of analysis and evaluation. For example, in their study of Islam, students know that Zakah, the third pillar of Islam, concerning the giving of charity, derives its name from the word that means purification. The average attaining students can interpret the link by pointing out the potential for money to be a cause of evil, but students were unable to make the link to the spiritual dimension, associated with the manner of the giving. The small number of higher attaining students enjoys the intellectual challenge that is posed by the 'Philosophy of Religion' section of their studies. They are skilful at not only selecting and demonstrating clearly relevant knowledge and understanding but also at using their knowledge to sustain a philosophical argument. For example, in their studies of the nature of deity, students understand the different philosophical positions concerning belief in the existence of God. However, the majority of students struggle with the analytical complexities involved.

232. Students' achievement in Year 12 is good. Students enter the sixth form with a below average baseline of skills and knowledge. Given the students' prior attainment at entry, there is tangible evidence of good progress and of good value added. This is clearly seen in their lessons. Students' progress in lessons, however, does not always result in success in tests and in-house examinations because of their failure to retain knowledge and understanding over time and because of the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject. Students who have English as an additional language achieve well, in line with other students.

233. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned and well prepared and lead to good learning. A developing characteristic of teaching in religious education is that the teachers' belief in the value of the subject is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This is beginning to have a strong impact on students' learning. Teachers are particularly effective at establishing good relationships. In some lessons, teachers tend to be overly didactic and students are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. In the best lessons, however, teachers are very adept at using a range of strategies to draw out significant points from material which is both challenging and exciting and teachers successfully exhort students to become more active participants in their own learning. Coursework lessons were lively, stimulating and enhanced students' learning. In those lessons where there were opportunities, such as the use of ICT for research, the lessons made a major contribution to students' attaining appropriate levels in some key skills, as well as enhancing their personal development. However, some students still have weaknesses in the interpretation and analysis of data.

234. The response of students is good and they generally show good application to their work. They respond diligently, settle quickly to task and sustain concentration. Their positive behaviour and response, which is often a direct result of good teaching and good classroom management, is an important factor in their increased learning.

235. Leadership and management are good. The head of department leads the department dynamically, effectively and efficiently and is an excellent role model for a department team committed to raising standards and to the encouragement of students to even higher achievement. In this she is well supported by her colleagues in the department. She, in turn, gives them good support. She has already spent money prudently and effectively on a range of new textbooks, which contribute significantly to the achievement of students. However, textbooks are still lacking. She has a vision for the future of the department that is based on a realistic evaluation of its strengths and the areas for its development.

236. There are some areas for development. Standards are still below average. Lack of appropriate text books, video materials and visits all impact adversely on students' attainment and progress. The department has recently appointed teachers who are making a very good contribution to the department's success. This is a good department with the capacity for continuing and greater success.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Recent results were above average.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Students share ideas freely and work very well together. They have good independent learning skills and a very positive attitude to their studies.

Area for improvement

- On occasion, over-lengthy explanation or over-directed activities prevent students developing their communication skills by participating fully in lessons.

237. Sociology is a relatively new subject to the sixth form and was introduced in 1997. The department has achieved some good examination results since then and take up rates have increased steadily. Students have opportunities to study at both AS and A2 levels. AS results were above average in 2002 giving students a good basis from which to start their A2 studies.

238. The standards of work of the current students are above average and represent very good achievement in relation to their standards at the start of the course. Students' very good performance is a result of creative and effective teaching with appropriate focus on examination techniques and study skills. All students show good knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theory and methodology and their skills of investigation and analysis are well developed. They also use a wide range of books, including original research studies, articles and other resources in order to learn for themselves. Students make effective use of IT skills, particularly in using the Internet, and when they are guided successfully by teachers to support independent learning. Overall, students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

239. Teaching is very good overall and learning is very good as a result. The principal features of successful teaching are teachers' excellent command of subject knowledge, enthusiasm for their subject and their students' progress and sharp planning to facilitate an appropriate range of methods and approaches for effective learning. Marking is rigorous and accurate. Students' work is assessed thoroughly with constructive comment and the use of targets to encourage students to overcome any difficulties. As a result, students have a very good grasp of subject knowledge and apply this well to class work and in answering routine questions. The occasional less successful lesson lacked pace and interest and there were

few opportunities for student involvement. This meant that less confident students tended to be passive in class discussion. Teaching and learning methods were not matched well enough to student needs. There was some evidence of over-lengthy exposition and teacher-led activities that did not provide students with the opportunity to participate actively or to develop their communication skills. Nevertheless, all lessons include particularly good explanation and confident delivery of subject knowledge. As a result, students are highly productive in the classroom and they are attentive, self-disciplined and behave with courtesy and good manners towards teachers and fellow students.

240. The subject is very well led and managed. The monitoring of students' progress is comprehensive and meticulous and support for students' learning is impressive. Some aspects of teaching referred to above require continuing development.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students' are achieving very well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Students develop an informed and mature response to the subject.
- The subject is managed with clear vision and very high expectations.

Areas for improvement

- Improve access to computers
- Consolidate accommodation to form a suite of rooms.

241. In 2002 all students obtained at least a pass grade in the AS level examinations. There was also an improvement in the number of students achieving the higher grades. The number of those achieving grades A-C rose by 64 per cent. A level results also demonstrated a strong increase in 2002 with all students achieving grades in the range C-E. Students' results indicated very good achievement in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.

242. The standard of work of the current Year 13 students are average overall with the highest attaining students performing at above average levels and the majority in line with expected standards. Year 13 students deal confidently with the application of theory to practical situations and have a very good understanding of the work of a range of psychologists. In a lesson where they discussed multiple personality disorders, for example, students drew effectively on video evidence to produce coherent and well structured arguments which showed insight into and understanding of this condition. Their written work is equally coherent and expresses well informed views.

243. In Year 12 students' attainment is average with higher attaining students achieving above average. Students' achievement in relation to their GCSE results is very good. Students display a very clear understanding of the subject and an ability to put across their views in an informed manner. A significant element in their understanding is their development of a technical vocabulary which informs both their written work and discussion of areas such as Freudian theory and classical conditioning.

244. The teaching of psychology is very good. The teaching emphasises the value of application and interpretation through class and group discussion. Very effective use is made of questioning both to challenge students and to ensure their understanding. High quality work books are a significant element in developing students' general knowledge of the subject. Similarly, teachers' very good subject knowledge enables students to develop mature and

informed responses. This was illustrated in a Year 12 discussion of conditioning and learning theory, a complex area which due to clear explanation students were able to understand and discuss with confidence. Similarly, a Year 13 group responded very well to a discussion of cultural relativism in which they showed a clear understanding of the interpretation of cultural factors in the explanation of behaviour. The success of the teaching can be measured by the high number of students who continue their studies at A2 level and the desire of a substantial number of students to continue the study of psychology in higher education.

245. Management is very good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to establish psychology as both a viable and successful subject. Imaginative ideas, such as arranging for students to travel independently to a conference at Nottingham University or participate in university research projects (such as patterns of swallowing for stroke victims) have done much both to develop students' interest and to heighten the profile of the subject in the school. The work of students is carefully assessed to enable students to develop their work. There is also effective student self-assessment. The policy of ensuring that all students have their own text book is an important element in maintaining standards. Students' learning could be further developed by ensuring that the department has its own dedicated computers and has a combined suite of rooms. Psychology was not inspected at the previous inspection but improvement has clearly been very good since that time.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on the courses in English language, English literature and Urdu.

English language

Overall, the quality of provision for English language is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, informed by an understanding of students' needs, so students learn well and make progress.
- Relationships in the classroom are good, which encourages students to participate.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment are low.
- The achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is inhibited by their language competence, particularly in their written answers.

246. Overall, standards of attainment are below average. Small numbers of students have entered for the subject at A level since the first entry in 2000. In comparison with national standards the grades achieved have been low although all students entered have obtained at least pass grades. In 2002, the average grade achieved by the six students entered was nearly a grade below the national average. Currently six students are following the A2 course in Year 13 and eleven the AS course in Year 12.

247. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the end of year 13 are generally below the national average and in line with the results in the A level examinations. Students in Year 13 show some confidence in talking about language and in a lesson on child language development were able to work quite independently of the teacher to present group conclusions drawn from the analysis of conversation transcripts. In another lesson they worked well in pairs, finding information in an article on the decay of language to answer a task sheet. Orally, students show competence and make perceptive comments, though they are expressed more conversationally than in the language of linguistic analysis.

They are not confident in the use of appropriate terminology though they recognise it when prompted and, with sensitive teacher management, can exchange ideas maturely. Written work shows evidence of research, and students word-process some of their work. With good teacher support students complete a good variety of analysis exercises and prepare extended coursework pieces on individual language investigations. Writing tasks are conscientiously completed but generally lack fluency and the required depth and detail. Students' levels of attainment on entry to the course are below average overall. The standards achieved represent satisfactory progress in the light of their previous GCSE results.

248. Students in Year 12 show understanding of the terminology of language analysis, but in many cases are not comfortable in using it. In a lesson on the analysis of transcripts of conversations illustrating gender differences in the use of language, however, they recognised some grammatical structures, and made efforts to use the appropriate terms to identify them. They perceived differences in the use of vocabulary, but showed a limited capacity to describe them. In their written work, students show the capacity to make detailed notes, summarise academic texts and plan extended written answers. They are also able to complete exercises in the analysis and use of language. Their writing is, however, heavily dependent upon teacher input, there is little confident use of technical vocabulary and a lack of fluency. Standards of attainment observed are, overall, below average, determined in part by the range of students' prior attainment on entry to the course and by their competence in the use of language.

249. Students have good relationships with each other and their teachers that make them comfortable in contributing to class discussion, in some cases through gentle prompting. They work conscientiously, taking notes voluntarily, and show interest in the work.

250. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well-planned, informed by good subject knowledge and understanding, and learning objectives are made clear to the students. There is a good variety of activities, including those that involve students in contributing to discussion or preparing presentations. They are encouraged to make contributions by the mature and good-humoured relationships in the classroom and the great care taken to ensure understanding. Teachers are very supportive and students' work is thoroughly marked with points for improvement identified. Teachers assist students' progress by the provision of a good variety of task and information sheets. There is a very clear desire to develop students' self-confidence and enable them to become independent learners.

251. The subject is managed well. Teaching is shared between staff who work cooperatively, ensuring consistency of delivery of the course and constant monitoring of students' progress. There is a shared commitment to raising standards.

English literature

Overall, the quality of provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Most students are conscientious and are ready to discuss the social and moral issues that arise in literature.
- Teachers possess good knowledge of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies do not ensure that the needs of all students, particularly with respect to improving their skills in writing, are met.
- Students have not developed independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected.

252. In 2001, the number of students entered for A-level was so small as not to be statistically significant, so it is not possible to give a judgement of the results obtained in relation to the national average. However, the results were similar to those obtained in 2000 and 2002, and the standard attained has been below or well below the national expectation for the course. Standards seen during the inspection were below the national expectation. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement is satisfactory.

253. The number of students taking the subject is small, though most who start courses finish them, whether to AS or A2 level.

254. Students are notably conscientious in their approach to their studies. When they are asked to prepare passages from Shakespeare or Chaucer as part of their homework, they do so with considerable care, some students writing almost full paraphrases. Students are attentive in class and take notes. Those who have just a limited understanding take brief notes, whilst those who follow the work in more depth often take very full notes. Even so, most students tend to respond to the gist of what they have studied rather than in engaging with the detail of the text itself. Consequently, they are able to talk about the social and moral issues that arise but are not able to offer an independent evaluation of the quality of what they have read. Many students taking the course lack familiarity with the specific type of language needed to communicate their response to literature. Even so, higher attaining students do produce full, well-illustrated work on, for example, the nature of the relationship between Willy and Linda Loman in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman". In general, however, students complete fewer extended written tasks than might be expected. Students' independent learning skills are also limited.

255. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers possess good subject knowledge, as was seen in a Year 12 class when the teacher agreed with her students a suitable paraphrase of part of Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales", typed it into a computer and then displayed it on a whiteboard. This meant that students felt sure they understood what they were studying and could also keep an accurate record of what they had learnt. Teachers also use questioning skilfully to lead students to become more reflective readers. This was seen, for example, when the teacher probed students about the possible meanings of "honour" within the context of Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure". This led students to be more aware of the different layers of meaning that might be contained in the literature they were studying. In a number of instances, students have a limited understanding of the social and religious framework in which early literature was written. Teachers are aware of this and provide full explanations of such features when it is necessary. There is a good rapport between students and teachers and this contributes to there being a good environment in which learning takes place. However, in a number of lessons seen, teachers did not

sufficiently take into account students' prior attainment. Thus, for example, a number of students are not able to express their response to what they have read in a lucid fashion. However, teachers do not model full and explicit responses to literature in a full written form, as might be expected. Students are not required to complete as many pieces of writing as are normally seen and this, in turn, means they do not receive the benefits of having their work marked.

256. As there was no judgement made about the subject at the time of the previous inspection, it is not possible to comment on progress since then.

Urdu

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well as a result of their positive attitudes, the good teaching they receive and very good relationships between students and teacher.
- Standards are in line with expectations.
- The subject is led and managed well.

Areas for improvement

- Some students do not get sufficient teaching time. This puts additional pressure on both the teacher and students in their effort to meet the demands of the course.
- There are currently too few opportunities for students to use information and communication technology (ICT) to help them with their work.
- The scheme of work needs improvement to help planning of lessons.

257. A level examination results for the higher grades A and B have been well above the national average and for A-E grades above the national average for the last three years. AS level examination results in 2001 for the higher grades A and B and A-E grades were above the national average but were lower in 2002.

258. In work seen during the inspection standards of attainment are broadly average. Students who are taking AS and A2 examinations together can discuss and give their own opinions in Urdu about the characters of the play 'Anarkali' and can make notes. The work seen of one higher attaining A2 student shows that she can summarise different chapters of the novel 'Amrao Jaan Ada' in both Urdu and English. AS level students in Year 12 can talk about their prepared topic and can take part in discussion showing good understanding. They demonstrate well the knowledge and understanding of the contemporary society and cultural heritage of Urdu speaking communities. They are fluent in their talk, can give their personal opinions and use an extensive range of vocabulary and expressions, containing topic specific language. For example, one student in Year 12 class could give several reasons against arranged and forced marriages. Overall, students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

259. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are very clear and are shared with students. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere in lessons that is helping students in their learning and confidence. Students get opportunities to discuss issues related to their study and are challenged appropriately. Students are very positive in their approach to the subject. They are very keen to learn and do well in their examination.

260. The teacher manages the subject very well. The teacher is committed to do what is best for the students. Students are happy with the support and guidance they receive. Although the number of students following AS and A2 level courses is good some students do not get enough teaching time because of timetabling difficulties. This puts additional pressure on both the teacher and students to do full justice to the course requirements. The present scheme of work does not help the teacher, as it does not show what work is to be covered in each term and how much time is needed for each topic. Although the teacher has been provided with a laptop computer that is well used to prepare good quality worksheets, opportunities for students to use ICT for their independent study are rare.