

# THE ABBEY COLLEGE

## MALVERN WELLS

### WORCESTERSHIRE

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**Reporting Inspector: Mr M Thirkell HMI**

**Date of Inspection: 6-10 November 2000**

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#### Information about the college

Name of college:	The Abbey College		
Type of college :	Independent Tutorial College		
Status:	Registered		
Association membership:	British Accreditation Council (BAC)		
Age range of students:	11-29		
Gender of students :	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students):	boys: 42	girls: 24	total: 66
Number on roll (part-time students):	boys: 0	girls: 0	total: 0
Number of boarders:	boys: 39	girls: 39	total: 63
Number of students with a statement of special educational need:	boys: 0	girls: 0	total: 0
Number of students on the	boys: 0	girls: 0	total: 0

college's register of special educational need:

Number of students with English as an additional language:            boys: 37            girls: 20            total: 57

Termly fees (day students):            from £2,050 to £3,280

Termly fees (boarders):            £4,100

College address:            253 Wells Road, Malvern Wells, Worcestershire WR14 4JF

Telephone number:            01684 892300

Fax number:            01684 892757

Name of principal:            Mr H Kaveh (acting principal and owner's representative)

Name of college's proprietor:            Mrs M B Fhafiei

DfEE number:            885/6026

Unique Reference Number:            117035

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## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION**

The inspection was carried out in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Employment of the college's suitability for registration under the Education Act 1996. To this end, the report concentrates on those aspects of the college relevant to the purpose. Three subjects, English, mathematics and science, are reported on in detail.

The inspection focused on students of compulsory college age, that is 16 years of age and below, and older students taking the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and other courses, including the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level.

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

A lack of continuity in recent years has contributed to serious weaknesses in relation to overall leadership and management. The college recognises these weaknesses and has begun to make improvements. The management of the college is currently in transition. Overall, the college has responded positively to recommendations about the provision for students' welfare made in recent inspections by OFSTED (Office for

Standards in Education) and social services, but more improvements are needed and vigilance must be maintained.

The attainment of most pre-16 students observed in lessons was overall satisfactory, although varied considerably from good to below average. In English, the youngest students showed increasing confidence in oral work, although they were still at an early stage of developing writing and other language skills. The attainment of most older pre-16 students was generally satisfactory relative to the stage of their studies and language skills. More advanced students wrote with fluency.

The results of public examinations taken by students at both IGCSE and GCE A-level during the past two years reflect unevenness of attainment. Entries have been too small and sporadic to identify and interpret trends. In lessons seen on the inspection the attainment of most post-16 students following A-level courses was satisfactory and sometimes good. Students taking A-level English Literature were articulate throughout and their attainment was particularly good in mathematics and physics.

Students' progress in lessons was generally good overall. In English, the fluency of pre-16 students rapidly improves, mostly with a marked improvement in reading and writing. However, shortcomings in language skills sometimes represented a significant degree of impediment to the progress of some students across the curriculum, usually, but not exclusively, recent arrivals at the college. Progress was made by pre-16 students in mathematics and in science. Above average progress was generally apparent in A-level classes visited in English, mathematics and the sciences, but not in A-level Art.

Students generally have a strong sense of belonging to a multi-cultural community. They come from many nationalities, and most enjoy the opportunities provided to learn about each other's customs and backgrounds in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Their attitudes and behaviour are generally good. In the majority of lessons students show interest and sustain concentration, even when left alone or when teaching is less effective. They behave well in prep and work with a sense of purpose.

The quality of teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory: it is good overall. Good teaching was characterised by the use of clear explanations, with expositions carefully considered to support students' progress and good pace. Teaching that was otherwise satisfactory, sometimes shows a limited range of teaching strategies, particularly in relation to the needs of foreign students. In lessons where unsatisfactory teaching occurred, planning and support was inadequate to meet the needs and aspirations of the students. Teachers' planning on a day-to-day basis varies from good to inadequate.

The college offers a suitable range of courses that prepares students for the IGCSE and GCE A-level. Students who enter the college with very limited English are given a short course called 'Teen Intensives', usually for one term, aimed at developing their skills in language. Although this course is appropriate to the language needs of the students, it lacks breadth. It is also questionable whether the college environment is suitable for small numbers of young people of this age.

The planning of the curriculum as a whole is inadequate. Whilst the range of subjects offered on other pre-IGCSE courses is sufficient for the needs of the students, the provision seems to be based on the availability of staff to teach them. Time spent on project work in the library is wasted because projects are not always set. Students who progress to IGCSE courses are offered a reasonable menu, but the choice available is constrained by the expertise of the staff, which lies in English, mathematics, the sciences, business and art. There are no courses on humanities, nor music or drama. For post-16 students, there is no extension of the curriculum through general studies or time-tabled physical education, although some sports facilities are available.

The present schemes of work are too rudimentary to assist in planning, most being a list of broad topics to be covered. Those in English and physics are of better quality. At present no-one has overall responsibility for curricular matters and there is no forum where relevant issues are debated and action planned. Amongst other things, this means that cross-curricular elements, such as careers and personal and social education, are not sufficiently well planned.

New structures are in place to ensure consistent implementation of provision and record keeping relating to pastoral aspects of the college. Provision for boarding is now overall satisfactory. Students report favourably on their ability to talk to members of staff on an individual basis on issues relating to their welfare. The recent period of continuous change, both in management structures and in personnel with specific responsibility for boarding, has meant that procedures for the support, guidance and welfare of the students have not been consistently followed. The college must ensure that where concerns about welfare are raised, they work in partnership with appropriate agencies, such as Social Services, to resolve them.

Currently the college lacks clear educational direction. The management structure in place is not effective; administrative and academic management are too separate, and there are no formal systems in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the college's work. The necessary priority has not been given to evaluating the impact of management decisions. An educational consultant has been employed to review aspects of the college, including its management structures. A commitment to developing and improving aspects of the college, expressed by management, is supported by a number of actions recently taken.

The college is adequately staffed. Teachers as a whole are suitably qualified and the match between qualifications and experience and work undertaken is mostly good. The teacher to student ratio is favourable. However, continuity of staffing has not been good and the rate of turn-over of staff has been high in recent years. Although the staffing meets the needs of the curriculum currently offered, there is a shortage of expertise in humanities subjects and in music and drama. The deployment of staff is not well managed and there are evident difficulties in providing appropriate cover in the event of staff absence. The college lacks a policy for staff development.

The premises and accommodation have a range of good features and are satisfactory overall. The specialist rooms are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The gymnasium and other indoor facilities for physical education and fitness are satisfactory. The library provides a pleasant environment for study and learning, as does the adjacent and more recently created information and communication

technology (ICT) area. Resources for learning are adequate in most areas of the curriculum. Filling gaps in provision, especially in relation to the availability of computers, including further internet access, is recognised by the college as a priority.

Provision for boarding is overall satisfactory, but there are some issues still to be addressed. Standards of maintenance are satisfactory and students have good working space. There are sufficient residential staff to cover the boarding houses during the evening and overnight; procedures for medical emergencies are well understood. However, the college matron is in residence in the girls' house and there is a current lack of qualified personnel to give first aid in the other houses. Security of the boarding houses was inadequate during the inspection. In all the houses there is a wide age range and for the youngest students, aged 11 and 13, there is a risk of isolation.

Generally, students report favourably on their life at the college and the help and advice provided by the house parents. However, there has been considerable turnover in staffing and, in the case of provision for the youngest students, there is a lack of experience and training.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to raise the quality of education provided, the proprietor and management of the college should:

- act urgently to secure the appointment of a permanent principal;
- define the educational aims of the college;
- establish an effective structure for management within the college which supports the principal in decision-making, including on the employment of staff;
- provide clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of senior and other staff in order to ensure the development of both the academic and welfare aspects of management;
- ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of the college's work, including the use of curriculum time;
- establish a staff development policy and ensure that all teachers are adequately trained to teach students whose first language is not English;
- develop schemes of work which effectively support teachers' planning and support continuity of learning;
- improve its current provision for personal and social education (PSE) for students of compulsory college age;
- implement and further develop the range of newly-devised policies to support the students' academic progress and pastoral welfare;
- restrict its provision to students aged 14 and above, unless the number of students under 14 grows and appropriate provision for them can be made.

The management of the college must also ensure that:

- concerns about students' welfare raised by this and a recent social service inspection are addressed in full; careful attention must be given to the

- organisation, and where necessary the separation, of students, in the light of the wide age range of students, on the campus;
- ensure that the college fully complies with statutory requirements relating to students' attendance;
  - improve attention to health and safety by carrying out a full risk assessment and providing training for staff and by resolving problems in safety procedures in science.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the college**

The Abbey College is privately owned and has been established in its attractive, elevated and extensive site in Malvern Wells since 1974. The buildings retain many of the features of the girls' college that formerly occupied the site.

The college is co-educational. It caters for a wide age-range and currently has students ranging from 11 to 29. The students come from a wide variety of countries. The college includes provision for the needs of international students preparing to enter UK educational institutions at various stages, normally up to 19 years of age. This latter group was the focus of the inspection. Most of these students board in the college with, currently, a small minority lodged with local families.

The college also provides an intensive one year foundation course for those wishing to enter a medical degree programme, taught in English, at the Charles University in Prague, for whom Abbey College recruits UK based students directly after A-level courses. Throughout the year the campus is shared by groups of students on short intensive English language based programmes, and by longer-term students focusing entirely on English. The latter sometimes share lessons with full-time academic students. In addition a group of British engineering students reside in separate accommodation on the college site. Although they do not receive any tuition at the college, they may use the college dining and other social facilities. These groups were not the subject of the inspection.

The college was established by the current proprietor's husband. Since 1986 the management of the college has been in the charge of the proprietor's son, who, during the inspection, was the acting principal. The college has had an unsettled period of academic leadership. The previous principal retired due to ill health. During the past five years, and up to the date of the inspection, three people have held the position of principal. The vice-principal took up his post at the beginning of the current academic year. A consultant, currently employed by the college to review and improve college management structures, is identified as principal designate.

### **Key Indicators**

#### **Attainment in Key Stage 3 (age 11-14)**

No students took National Tests.

#### **Attainment in Key Stage 4 (aged 15-16)- IGCSE (International GCSE)**

		5 or more A-C	5 or more A-G	1 or more A-G
Number of students	Boys	0	0	1
	Girls	0	0	3
	Total	0	0	4
Percentage achieving standard specified	College (IGCSE)	0	0	80%
	National (GCSE)*	46.6%	92.7%	95.9%

\*Nearest comparison to IGCSE

### Attainment Post 16

#### 1999-2000

	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	23.5	18.5	21	12	-	2.7
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.8	2.9	3

*A-Level results in terms of UCAS points*

### Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest reporting term:			%
	Authorised	College	1.15
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	College	0.7
<i>Data were unavailable for the latest complete reporting year</i>	Absence	National comparative data	1.1



## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students of statutory college age during the previous year.

	girls	boys	total
Fixed period	0	0	0
Permanent	0	0	0
totals	0	0	0

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :		%
	Very good or better	16%
	Satisfactory or better	89%
	Less than satisfactory	8%

## PART A: ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

### EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE

#### Attainment and progress

Students' attainment on arrival at the college varies considerably. This is reflected in assessments administered at the point of entry. The tests used are not standardised, but their results indicate levels in mathematics generally below that expected for the age groups and mixed, but overall rather weak, performance in English. The results of these preliminary assessments, along with any other relevant information, are used to guide the placement of students on their courses. For a small number of younger entrants, the latter includes the 'Teen Intensives' course which is taken by students with limited English.

The attainment of most pre-16 students observed in lessons was overall satisfactory, although it varied considerably from good to below average. In English, the youngest students show increasing confidence in oral work, although they are still at an early stage of developing writing and other language skills. Older pre-16 students also have a wide range of attainment, although given their different background experiences, some are relatively fluent in oracy and some show good understanding of what they have read. The attainment of pre-16 students currently taking IGCSE and the sub-

IGCSE course was generally satisfactory for the stage of their studies. More advanced students were able to write with fluency.

In mathematics lessons pre-16 students' attainment varied from good to weak, but was generally satisfactory for their age and much dependent on their English skills. Overall, the attainment of students in mathematics was a positive feature of pre-16 classes.

Attainment in science varied considerably both across and within pre-16 classes. The attainment of the youngest students was generally below average, however, although their breadth and depth of knowledge were sometimes fragmentary, their investigative skills were sound. The attainment of students taking IGCSE broadly matched the national expectation, with some achieving particularly well.

The attainment of post-16 students following A-level courses was generally in line with or above national norms. Students taking A-level English Literature demonstrated secure levels of understanding and attainment in the key skills of speaking, listening and writing. In A-level Mathematics, overall attainment was securely in line with national norms. In the sciences, attainment corresponds with national norms and particular strengths were noted in physics.

The results of public examinations taken by students during the past two years reflect unevenness of attainment. Entries, however, have been too small and sporadic to identify trends. In 1999 none of the 18 candidates secured five or more higher grade passes (A-C); however, the majority of entrants in science subjects secured grades in this range. The IGCSE results for summer 2000 reflect lower attainment than the previous year: no candidates achieved five A-C grades and A-C subject passes were limited to English and German, both as first languages.

At A-level, the results for 1999 were such that of the five subjects and 18 students represented by pass grades (A-E) were limited to mathematics. The results in 2000 were better: 28 candidates entered in eight subjects and pass grades were achieved across the range of subjects, although higher grade performances were confined to the three sciences and mathematics.

Students' progress in lessons was generally good overall. In English, the fluency of pre-16 students rapidly improves, mostly with a marked improvement in reading and writing. However, shortcomings in English represented a significant impediment to the progress of some students across the curriculum, usually, but not exclusively, recent arrivals at the college. Pre-16 students' progress was overall satisfactory in mathematics and in science. Above average progress was generally apparent in all A-level classes visited in English, mathematics and the sciences, but not in A-level Art.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. In most lessons students show interest and sustain concentration. They behave well in prep and work with a sense of purpose. Their behaviour in and around the college is good, they are courteous to adults and to each other and there is little evidence of graffiti or litter.

There are constructive relationships between students, with prefects taking responsibility and showing concern for younger students. There are good relationships between students and staff. Students are able to work collaboratively when required and clearly enjoy doing so. They appreciate the student services provision and have enjoyed the responsibilities and opportunities provided by the social and food committee to influence provision in the college.

The students come from many nationalities and enjoy the opportunities provided to learn about each others' customs and backgrounds in, for the most part, an atmosphere of mutual respect. There is a strong sense of belonging to multi-cultural community. The college could look at ways of extending student responsibilities further.

### **Attendance**

Attendance appears good and there is no reported unauthorised absence and very little authorised absence for students of compulsory college age. However, the college had no available statistics for the previous year. Those available cover the period from the beginning of the term of the inspection to the last day of the week prior to the inspection.

Statutory requirements for recording attendance are not yet met. Registration is conducted in the morning, but there is variability in procedures. Absences are recorded, but not all registers clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence. The college needs to establish procedures to ensure reliable attendance figures and the prompt dissemination of information about students' whereabouts to staff. Patterns of absence are noted, but late arrival by students to classes, and subsequent disruption to the beginning of lessons, requires action.

An admissions register is maintained by the college. The college retains all the required details about students, but some further modifications to the way in which they are recorded are still necessary to ensure that the register reflects the transitory nature of the college population.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

The quality of teaching is overall good, but it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. During the inspection teaching was at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons; in just over three-fifths of lessons it was good or very good; in three it was unsatisfactory. Good teaching was characterised by the clear exposition, carefully considered to support students' progress, positive teacher-student interaction, a range of teaching styles, high expectations of what the students could achieve and good pace. However, teaching that was otherwise satisfactory sometimes used a limited range of strategies, particularly in relation to the language needs of foreign students. When teaching was unsatisfactory, planning and support were not adequate to meet students' needs, in particular their language needs.

Most teachers are qualified in their subjects, although their ability to teach across a range of levels is sometimes constrained. Overall, teachers manage their relatively

small groups well and students are for the most part co-operative and respond well. However, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve ranges from high to unsatisfactory and levels of work are not always well matched to need.

Teachers' planning varies from good to inadequate. Currently, most schemes of work for subjects provide insufficient support to teaching. They provide insufficient guidance to ensure continuity when subject teachers are absent. It is not easy for the college to obtain information on students' prior attainment and the diverse needs of students presents a particular challenge to teachers' planning. Although the college tests students' ability on entry in English and mathematics to determine an appropriate level of course entry, the range of these tests needs to be extended. This is an area recently identified by the college for improvement, and although not yet in use, individual student support records have been prepared.

Teachers' ability to communicate effectively with students who are at an early stage of their understanding of English varies from very good to inadequate. The college is aware of this important need given the nature of the intake and in-service training has begun.

Teaching time is sometimes wasted by students arriving late for lessons, or because of unsatisfactory arrangements for introducing newly-arrived students into classes. Valuable time was also lost on several occasions during the inspection because of inadequate arrangements for providing cover for absent teachers. Work set on these occasions is sometimes insufficiently demanding.

The quality of marking and feedback to students varies from very good to inadequate. At its best, the feedback given to students is clear and detailed. In English, for example, marking is specific and encouraging and supports further progress. At worst, marking does not correct poor presentation and does little to inform students on how their work might be improved. Many students present and organise their work well; however, a significant number need more direction on what constitutes an acceptable standard.

Assessment grades are collated, but data are not well used to inform teaching and to address students' individual needs. Prep is set and most boarding students apply themselves willingly to the tasks set. Occasionally, students' desire to study during prep was greater than the demand of the work set.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

The college offers a range of courses that prepares students for IGCSE and A-level. The outline of the courses available is logical and offers the potential for progression by students.

Students who enter the college with very weak English are given a short course called 'Teen Intensives', usually for one term and aimed at developing their skills in language. They spend the majority of their time studying English, but they also take mathematics, ICT, sport and art. For part of their time they join students on other courses, for example mathematics. Currently, there are only two students on this

course, one aged 11 and the other 13. The intention of the course is appropriate to the needs of the students, but lacks breadth because it includes no science or humanities.

A few older pre-16 students are placed on a sub-IGCSE course, again of a transitional nature, with an emphasis on learning English. There are currently three students on this course. This has a broad range of subjects, including mathematics, science, ICT, art, PSE, sport, humanities, sports studies, current affairs and library work, as well as English.

As their English improves, students may transfer to a more demanding pre-16 course, in preparation for taking IGCSE. This has a similar range of subjects to the other pre-16 course, except that business studies is introduced. There are currently six students on this course who are sometimes taught with those taking IGCSE.

Whilst the range of subjects offered on both these pre-16 courses is sufficient for the needs of these students, there are some concerns about their organisation and rationale. For example, some subjects seem to be taught simply because of the availability of staff rather than because of a clear philosophy of course design. The time spent on project work in the library is misused because students have not yet been set projects. Since students with the greatest language and learning need are given two hours a week for this work, it is an inefficient use of time.

There are presently eight students taking the course which leads to the IGCSE. These students may take up to six subjects from a choice of nine. This is a reasonable menu, but choice is constrained by the expertise of the staff, which lies in English, mathematics, the sciences, business and art. Humanities, music and drama are not offered.

Post-16 students may join the business foundation course, a package of English, mathematics, accounting, business studies, economics and computing. This is a sub-A level course and is used by students to obtain entry to higher education both in the UK and abroad. Alternatively, students may choose a combination of A-level courses. Most choose three, some two and, occasionally, four subjects. For post-16 students who want to study English, the classes are arranged at two levels, advanced and intermediate. In addition, they have a lesson in British culture and a weekly excursion with time for preparation; most of their time is spent studying English. For post-16 students, there is no extension of the curriculum through organised physical education or general studies, although some sports facilities are available.

Whilst the teaching of individual subject courses is satisfactory, there is inadequate planning of the curriculum as a whole. The present schemes of work are too rudimentary to assist in planning, most being a list of broad topics to be covered. Those in English and physics are of better quality. At present there is no one with overall responsibility for curricular matters and no forum where relevant issues are debated and action planned. This means that cross-curricular elements, such as careers and PSE, are inadequately planned and provided. Students may request an interview with the local careers service and receive help on university entrance requirements from within the college, but there is no careers education or guidance time-tabled.

The PSE course considers some aspects of health education but, at present, the planning, based on the evidence available during the inspection, is not sufficiently thorough. Education about drugs and sex education needs to be improved.

There is no written policy on assessment. Students' work is assessed and marked in different ways by different teachers. Although students are regularly assessed and examined and grades awarded for effort and achievement, the results, which appear in college reports, are not used by tutors in the monitoring of students' academic performance. Reports are issued to parents four times a year. In the main they are helpful and give indications on attainment and effort, but they do not record targets for the improvement of students' work or say much about the students' skills in subjects. The consultant engaged by the college has, amongst other things, focused on procedures for monitoring students' academic progress.

### **Support, guidance and students' welfare**

The college has been through a continuous period of change in personnel with specific responsibility for boarding. Effective systems and procedures for the support, guidance and welfare of the students have not been followed consistently. New procedures are now in place. The college has been inspected on several occasions by the local social services department and OFSTED when serious concerns about welfare have been raised. The college has now taken action to resolve a number of these concerns, but must continue to work with the appropriate agencies to resolve them all.

During the inspection students reported favourably on their ability to talk to members of staff on an individual basis on issues relating to their welfare. The designated independent listener lives locally and attends the college once a week to meet students and listen to their concerns. Her number and that of Childline are clearly displayed throughout the college.

Tutor periods vary in quality and levels of support. The best provide a means of transmitting information with sensitivity on particular issues related to individual students or groups. These provide opportunities for academic and welfare issues to be addressed. However, the value of these morning sessions is inconsistent in relation to the support they provide. A well-conducted college assembly during the inspection provided an opportunity for personal reflection.

There are two accident books and two incident books relating to boarding and to the college as a whole. These are now being completed on a regular basis and the procedures generally meet requirements. It is essential that the records are maintained, are comprehensive and inclusive as possible. There was no sign of bullying during the inspection, reflecting generally positive relations observed between students. There are clear disciplinary requirements and procedures about which the students voiced no complaints. There is a complaints record book dating from the beginning of the current academic year

There are good records of attendance at the medical centre. The facility is externally secure, but the internal cabinet where records are kept should be locked. The medical centre is spacious and well appointed with beds for sick students, but currently is not

used. The doctor attends on a weekly basis. There is currently only one residential member of staff with up-to-date first aid qualifications. Plans to remedy this must be pursued as a matter of urgency.

The college has a detailed logbook about fire drills and procedures and maintenance of equipment and received a satisfactory bill of health from a local fire officer in 1997. Health and safety procedures are in place, but there is insufficient attention to risk assessment. The college should undertake a full assessment and provide training for its staff, with particular emphasis on areas such as college outings, travel and leave for students at weekends.

At present the ages of students on the campus range from 11 to 29. There are eleven students under 16 and two under 14. The college does not provide a suitable environment for students under 14 when their numbers are so small. Provision for their social development is inadequate.

### **Boarding**

Provision for boarding pertinent to this inspection has been improved and is now overall satisfactory. The college provides boarding accommodation in three separate houses, with one house allocated to all girls, another to the older boys and a smaller house for younger students. Accommodation is generally good, although room sizes and shapes vary. Some rooms have en-suite bathroom facilities. Standards of maintenance are satisfactory and students have good working space. Telephones are in working order. Many students have their own mobile phones. Each house has a common room and there are communal cooking and food storage areas.

Residential house parents are responsible for boarding. A weekly residential meeting chaired by the deputy principal is an effective forum for raising issues of welfare. Minutes of these meetings are recorded. Although discussion of individual students giving cause for concern is raised under any other business, this should have priority. Designated staff are permanently on duty in the residential houses through the evening and overnight. Procedures for medical emergencies are well understood, but the matron is in residence in the girls' house and the current lack of personnel qualified to give first aid in the other houses is not satisfactory.

The college has now addressed most of the specific concerns raised by previous inspections, but its management must be vigilant to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the importance of their responsibilities and that procedures are followed.

Although there is not always an adult in residence during the day, students have open access to the boarding areas. The security of the boarding houses during the inspection was inadequate. In all the houses there is a wide age range and younger students often find it difficult to get to sleep while older students are still up. The youngest students, aged 11 and 13, are at risk of isolation. There has been considerable turnover in staffing and, in the case of provision for the youngest students, there is a lack of experience and training.

Although food is adequate, at the time of the inspection, the choice available insufficiently reflected the broad cultural profile of the students. The college was in the process of appointing new caterers during the inspection.

Generally, students report favourably on their life at the college and the help and advice provided by the house parents. Given the fact that many of the students are a long way from home, there is a strong sense of community.

The college has recommenced placing students with host families. This should always be in the interest of the students and not seen as a disciplinary sanction.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

Providing effective links with parents is not a simple task for the college. Reports on students' progress are issued regularly throughout the academic year. Of the responses to a questionnaire sent to parents prior to the inspection, several indicated that they felt that information from the college on how well their child was getting on to be inadequate to varying degrees. The college should re-examine its strategies for maintaining links with parents and keeping them informed. A number of parents have visited the college, despite the considerable distances often involved, and the college has some rooms available for their use.

Students use of e-mail to make contacts with their parents is important, but access to computers with this facility is currently limited to half-hour sessions. This will be remedied by new computers ordered by the college.

Currently the college has few links with the local community. This has been identified by the college as an important area requiring development. Initiatives have begun this term since the appointment of a deputy principal with responsibility for pastoral matters. The table tennis team has begun to compete in local tournaments.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE COLLEGE**

### **Leadership and management**

A lack of continuity in recent years has contributed to serious weaknesses in relation to overall leadership and management. The college currently lacks clear educational direction. Management of the college is currently at a transitional phase. The pattern of management was not finally settled at the time of the inspection, although improvements have recently been implemented and planned.

The college proprietor does not play an active part in running the college. The owner's son is her business representative and has held this post in running the college for some time. Academic leadership and management have been unsettled for a number of years. In the past five years there have been three college principals. During the time of the inspection the proprietor's representative was the acting principal. A deputy principal has been appointed from the beginning of the current academic year. A consultant, employed by the college to undertake a general review of curriculum and management structures, and identified as the principal designate, has been responsible for preparing much of the documentation for the inspection.



The present structure of management is not effective. The roles and responsibilities of senior staff require clearer definition in order to ensure the development of both curriculum and welfare aspects of management. Administrative and academic management are too separate. There are no formal systems in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the college's work. The college, until recently, has not evaluated the impact of management decisions.

The college brochures contain a considerable amount of useful information, but no clear educational aims. However, recent guidance on boarding, provided during the inspection, contains useful principles which relate to that particular aspect of the college. The management of the college has recently asserted its belief in the value of the multi-cultural nature of the community. Students place a high value on this.

There is no development plan for the college, although there is an ambitious list of planned building improvements, which, should they be completed, would considerably enhance the college's provision.

Uncertain management has contributed to low morale amongst staff. Morale is effected by a number of issues, including the nature of the range of courses offered. The turnover of staff has been relatively high, although there is a group of long-serving teachers. This turnover impacts on the continuity of teaching and effective delivery of the curriculum. Departmental schemes of work are not strong enough to support continuity in teaching.

Greater attention needs to be given to matching staff, the curriculum and resources to the students' needs. Several students and parents expressed concern with their courses or level of work. Although there is a clear rationale for the courses and progression described by the college curriculum, several students have been accepted for courses which they feel do not match their specific needs.

The college employs a full-time bursar to secure efficient financial management; extensive records are maintained. Overall, effective use is made of the available accommodation and resources. However, the structures for identifying department budgets are too informal. There needs to be greater dialogue with teachers about department needs and developments.

The deployment of staff is not consistently well managed. Timetable arrangements do not generally allow for sufficient flexibility and there are difficulties in providing appropriate cover in the event of staff absence. In addition, a minority of teachers carry heavy teaching loads alongside substantial administrative duties.

A considerable number of important policy documents are either relatively new or very recent. For example, a child protection policy is now in place. Overall, the college's recent response to issues raised by inspections by OFSTED and the local social services department have been positive, although some issues still remain to be dealt with. The college complies with DfEE requirements for independent schools, except in relation to attendance.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

## **Staffing**

The college is adequately staffed. Of the 18 teaching staff a minority (eight) are full-time. The student-teacher ratio is favourable and class sizes are generally small. Turnover among staff has been particularly high in recent years.

Staff are generally suitably qualified and the match between their qualifications and experience and the work undertaken is mostly good. Although the staffing meets the needs of the curriculum currently offered, there is a shortage of expertise in humanities subjects and in music and drama.

There is little non-teaching support for classroom work. There is no laboratory or specialist ICT technician support, but the wide-ranging duties of the librarian extend to substantial and effective oversight of the ICT area, in addition to supervision of the various time-tabled activities undertaken in the library.

There is very limited professional development for staff, not all of whom have formal job descriptions. The college lacks a coherent policy for staff development. There is no system of staff appraisal.

## **Accommodation**

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory overall and have a number of good features. Classrooms for English and mathematics, for example, are of sufficient size and are adequately appointed. Accommodation for the sciences consists of three separate laboratories, all of which have preparation areas. The specialist facilities for the teaching of biology, chemistry and physics are variable in size and quality, but overall provision for the sciences is good. The gymnasium and other indoor facilities for physical education are satisfactory. The accommodation for art and photography is good, although at the time of the inspection was affected by alterations taking place.

The library, with its attractive upper floor gallery, provides a pleasant environment for study, as does the adjacent and more recently created ICT area. These facilities are well used but are cramped. The space currently assigned to ICT does not readily allow for the anticipated expansion.

## **Resources**

Resources for learning are adequate in most areas of the curriculum, although overall the college is not extensively resourced. The more important gaps in provision, especially in relation to the availability of computers, are recognised by the college as priorities for attention. There are, nevertheless, a number of positive features within the current provision. The fact that students are required to purchase and make use of prescribed texts for their individual courses ensures a basic textbook provision. The library has a modest, but carefully selected, range of books. In the English department, the availability of audio-visual material to support teaching is good. With the exception of resources for three-dimensional work, art is sufficiently resourced, and includes good photographic facilities. In the sciences, routine experimental work is adequately supported, notably in physics, but the modest range of more

sophisticated items of equipment leads to limitations in the range of experiences offered.

The range and scale of provision of computers have shortcomings. Computers are not generally available in classrooms. The ICT centre, adjacent to the library, provides adequate facilities for ICT lessons. Access to more computers, an extended range of software and internet facilities are planned.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **English, mathematics and science**

#### **English**

Students' attainment in English covers the whole spectrum from rudimentary knowledge of the language to a sophisticated grasp of written and spoken English evident in the work of students studying mainstream academic courses. Provision is largely through English as an additional language (EAL) and based on well-trying course books. Students are entered for external examinations which are felt appropriate to the course they attend and to match their expectations. Results at IGCSE in 1998 and 1999 reflect a wide range of performance with relatively strong showing in the oral component. Results in examinations of English as a foreign language reflect the same wide range of attainment.

The youngest students show increasing confidence in their oral work, but are still at the early stage in developing their writing skills. More advanced pre-16 group students show a wide range of attainment, but despite initial hesitancy, they are relatively fluent orally and some display good understanding of what they have read. In these classes there are some very fluent speakers. They display confidence in the spoken word with particular proficiency in presenting commentaries on chosen topics with relatively little reliance on notes. The better students are able to write with fluency and at fuller length, while weaker students rely on accurate copying from course books or teachers' notes on the board. Less articulate students often show very detailed response to set work in their files.

Students at A-level in English Literature are articulate and thoughtful, although at the time of the inspection their course had been disrupted by unavoidable staff absence.

At all levels, evidence in students' course files reflect fairly rapid progress in the acquisition of key skills, both sustained over time and in the short term in extensive courses. This is most evident in oral work. Older students taking the intensive English course make good progress.

The teaching seen was almost always satisfactory and often good. In good lessons teachers used a variety of resources to good effect. Good lessons had a strong multicultural dimension and rich human interest, and were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good humour. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Less effective lessons had less focused preparation and understanding of the needs of the

students, lacked variety and failed to sustain interest. Marking is generally good and understood by the students. At A-level it is particularly helpful.

The response of students was, in all cases, at least satisfactory and often good. Students often displayed considerable confidence in speaking and listening. Generally, students were focused and eager to learn and responded well to teachers' prompts.

The accommodation in the department is appropriate and well maintained. There are reasonable displays, but more students' work could be on show. Resources are adequate and include a range of course books, but there is no computer in the department and this deprives students of opportunities for independent learning.

The English department is well run, although at the time of the inspection the head of department was absent on compassionate leave and there were some problems with cover. Schemes of work lack some detail. The department maintains useful files relating to students' assessment and progress and useful information is maintained for each class. This is particularly helpful where more than one teacher is involved with a particular group.

## **Mathematics**

Standards attained by pre-16 students reflect their stages of development. Students enter the college with a wide range of prior attainment; consequently, results in the IGCSE in the last few years have varied. Results in 1999 and 1998 IGCSE were good, but weaker in 2000. Nevertheless, students perform well in mathematics when compared with other subjects. In the lessons seen students' attainment varied from good to weak, but was generally satisfactory for their age and much dependent on their language skills. Some have a very poor understanding of English and need their own programme of materials to help them learn. A number of pre-16 students need more accurate diagnosis of their difficulties. Students currently on the IGCSE course are achieving well and most display a degree of confidence in their work.

The attainment of the current students on post-16 courses is good. Past results at A-level have covered a wide range of grades, but there have been some high grades attained in 2000. In the lessons seen, first year A-level students attained good standards, coping well with aspects of calculus and were able to use their previous work well in the application of their present studies. Second year A-level students have a good understanding of mechanics and trigonometry and, again, were able to use their prior knowledge of the laws of motion for constant acceleration. The oral responses of the further mathematics students were confident and they had a good understanding of algebra.

The quality of teaching varies from just satisfactory to very good; most of the teaching is good. The good teaching was characterised by: the use of clear explanations; lessons which were conducted at a good pace; the clear development of concepts which enabled students to make progress in their learning, and a willingness to respond to students' comments and explore ways of looking at ideas. Where the teaching was less good, there was not enough oral work, too much technical language for students to assimilate, insufficient attention to discovering students' understanding

and a poor match of written work to the needs of students, particularly those with difficulties in English.

Most students respond well to the teaching. They are attentive and well behaved. Most teaching relies heavily on material from textbooks. Since the students provide these, resources are adequate. The teachers should consider using a wider range of resources, including computers. There is a need for calculators and textbooks to be made available in the event of students not having their own. Books in the library are in generally good supply, but they tend to be under-used. Accommodation for the subject is good. Two part-time teachers, who have had little in-service training in the recent past, share the teaching.

## **Science**

Attainment in lessons varied considerably both across and within teaching groups. Pre-16 students in non-exam groups showed a very wide range of attainment, but overall below average. Their performance in routine practical skills was competent. The performance of students taking the IGCSE course also reflected a broad range of attainment across each of the sciences. At A-level, attainment corresponded with national norms, with instances of high attainment in physics and, to a lesser extent, chemistry. In biology, class presentations made by students were delivered with a high measure of accuracy and confidence.

The results of IGCSE and A-level examinations taken during the past two years show considerable fluctuation. Candidate numbers have varied and the number of entries has been too small to indicate any significant trends. In the 1999 IGCSE higher level examinations results in science compared favourably with national figures. However, in the latest IGCSE examinations, none of the entrants achieved a higher level pass. The 1999 A-level results show that none of the students entered achieved a pass. However, the latest results show high level passes were achieved by all candidates entered for the exams.

Students at all levels made adequate and often good progress in science lessons. Progress was best in those lessons where students' language skills were better. Most progress was made where the learning objectives were made clear by the teacher. Although this was evident across the full range of age and ability, progress tended to be somewhat higher in the top pre-16 classes and at A-level.

Teaching was invariably satisfactory and predominantly good or very good. The three science staff, of whom one is part-time, are appropriately qualified. The quality of planning was variable. Teacher exposition was consistently good and a range of teaching styles used. Class management as a whole was effective and the pace of work and expectations of students mostly well judged. The teaching of the sciences at A-level was invariably good, especially in physics. However, there were instances, where lesson objectives and activities were not sufficiently well matched with students' needs. On these occasions, the higher attaining students were not always sufficiently challenged. Lower-attaining pre-16 students, including those with limited knowledge of English, often needed closer definition of expectations and learning support strategies.

The response of students to science was generally good. They listened well in class and responded to questions, although those with limited command of English are inevitably reticent. The more orally fluent members of some pre-16 and post-16 classes offered relevant comments and substantiated judgements.

The three science laboratories have adequate services. Accommodation for biology is limited and some improvements are needed in chemistry. Technician support in the sciences is not available and teachers have to maintain lesson resources. This can lead to conflicts of demand, especially in chemistry and biology. Some of the health and safety procedures which apply to laboratory provision are adequately met, but there is a need for better risk assessment. Action needs to be taken, for example, on the provision of dedicated spaces for eye-wash bottles and the appropriate disposal of unwanted hazardous material. The fume cupboard should be re-instated to its proper use. With the exception of physics, there are no computers and the modest availability of practical resources leads to some limitations in the quality and range of experiences offered.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

The inspection was undertaken by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, over a period of three days. A total of 37 classes was inspected, focusing on pre-IGCSE, IGCSE and A-level courses, in English, mathematics and science, although other subjects were seen; all full-time and most part-time teachers were observed teaching; a total of about 30 hours of inspection. Discussions were held with managers of the college, including the acting principal, other senior staff and classroom teachers. In addition, discussions were held with male and female students representing those of compulsory college age and above, including boarders and sixth form students, and the books of a range of students were scrutinised.

### **Data and indicators**

#### **Student data**

##### **Numbers in each Year**

Year	Female	Male	All
7	0	1	1
8	0	0	0
9	0	1	1

10	1	4	5
11	2	3	5
12	9	7	16
13+	12	26	44
Total	24	42	66

### TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Number of teachers	Full-time		Part-time	
total: 16	Female: 3	Male: 4	Female: 4	Male: 6
FTE teachers	FTE students		student : teacher ratio	
13.6	64		4.6:1	

### PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	64
Number of questionnaires returned:	20
Percentage return rate:	31.25%

### Responses:

	Strongly agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know
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My child likes college	6	10	4	-	-
My child is making good progress in college	2	11	3	1	3
Behaviour in the college is good	9	9	1	-	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	6	11	2	-	1
The teaching is good	3	10	3	-	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	4	9	3	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem	6	11	-	1	1
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	10	8	2	-	-
The college works closely with parents	2	9	3	3	3
The college is well led and managed	3	10	2	1	4
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible	6	11	1	-	2
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	2	10	4	1	3