

INSPECTION REPORT

Parkside Community College

Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110864

Headteacher: Andrew Hutchinson

Reporting inspector: Susan Thomas 2665

Dates of inspection: 15 May – 19 May 2000

Inspection number: 184028

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Parkside
Cambridge

Postcode: CB1 1EH

Telephone number: 01223 712600

Fax number: 01223 712601

Appropriate authority: Cambridgeshire

Name of chair of governors: Mr Pat Mitchell

Date of previous inspection: 28 November – 2 December 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
S Thomas	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and achievement</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
S Vincent	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
M W Griffiths	Team inspector	SEN	<p>How well are pupils or students taught?</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils or students?</p>
C Hackworth	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
R Vincent	Team inspector	English as an additional language English	
D Whitehouse	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology	
K Scheinkonig	Team inspector	Science	
T Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology	
T James	Team inspector	History Religious education	

P Starling	Team inspector	Geography	
C Campbell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
J Rowland	Team inspector	Art	
M Goldring	Team inspector	Music	
R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

NEMIC
 Advisory and Inspection Services
 Eastbourne Centre
 Station Road
 Sutton in Ashfield
 Notts
 NG17 5FF

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 Alexandra House
 33 Kingsway
 London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Parkside Community College is a small popular 11 – 16 mixed comprehensive school, with specialist arts college status for media arts technology. The college has 603 pupils, with slightly more boys than girls. The college draws its pupils from four main partner primary schools and other local primary schools. Most of the pupils live close to the college, in the city centre. 6.7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average, and 7% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. 6% of pupils speak English as an additional language, a few of whom are at an early stage of language acquisition. 20.7% of pupils are on the register of special educational needs. Of these 2.8% have statements of special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average, and is an increase since the previous inspection. The full ability range is represented in the college, although a high percentage of pupils enter with above-average attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Parkside is a good college because standards are high, teaching is good or better and leadership, management and governance are very good. The newly-appointed principal is managing change in the college very effectively and has generated a commitment to improve further. The standards attained by the pupils at 14 and 16 are significantly higher than those achieved nationally and those achieved in similar schools. Pupils' attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are very good. High standards are being sustained. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well and virtually all pupils leave the college with at least one or more GCSE passes. The quality of teaching is good with many examples of very good and excellent teaching. The college has a distinctive and inclusive ethos, which values the mature, articulate and self-reliant pupils. Resources are managed and deployed efficiently. The additional resources made available through the arts college status are used wisely. Costs per pupil are relatively low and pupils make good progress in their time at Parkside. The college, therefore, gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment at age 14 and 16 are significantly higher than standards in similar schools and pupils make good progress, especially from Year 9 onwards.
- The quality of teaching is good with many examples of very good and excellent teaching throughout the college.
- The leadership of the newly appointed principal is very good and highly effective in bringing about change; the senior management team is effective and it has a shared commitment to further improvement.
- The management and leadership for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- The governing body is very knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development in the college.
- The college has made good use of the opportunities associated with media arts technology status to enhance the quality and range of the curriculum and to raise standards.
- Information and communications technology is well established across most of the curriculum and is used effectively to raise standards.
- The extended curriculum and community provision provides pupils with many enrichment opportunities.

What could be improved

- The use made of assessment data to inform curriculum and lesson planning for whole classes, groups of pupils and individual pupils.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress to ensure that all pupils receive an appropriate challenge, whatever their ability.
- The consistency of routine and regular reviewing, monitoring and evaluation of curriculum and teaching in departments by middle managers.
- The consistency of development planning by middle managers, which is based on targets to improve standards and quality.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in December 1994. The most significant and rapid progress has been in the current school year, since the appointment of the new principal, who has set radical priorities for development. The college continues to demonstrate the values it promotes and to create the stimulating, caring and effective environment for learning, which was praised on the previous inspection. Many departments have improved and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Of the four key issues in the previous inspection report, the use of formative assessment has improved overall, but there are still inconsistencies across departments. Teachers have access to a greater amount of assessment data but some are not yet sufficiently skilled in how to use it to inform their planning. Planning to meet the learning needs of the most able pupils in the college and those with identified learning needs has improved. Following the previous inspection a start was made by the deputy principal to ensure that middle managers became more involved in college development planning. Since the introduction of a review process, involving middle managers in the monitoring and development of their curriculum areas, the college is now in a stronger position to evaluate its provision. Financial development planning now includes criteria for success and financial costing is more precise. The curriculum was reviewed following the last inspection. The college still does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. The college is well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	A
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

At the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment is well above the national average and well above attainment in similar schools. This trend has been sustained over the last three years. Pupils' performance in the mathematics and science tests was well above the average in comparison with similar schools in 1999 and in English it was at the average. Parkside pupils are making more progress in these subjects between the ages of 11 and 14 than pupils do nationally. Boys and girls attain equally well in the core subjects. GCSE results are well above the national average and well above attainment in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A* - C and 5 or more passes at grades A* - G has been well above the national average for the last three years. In 1999 the average points score for Parkside pupils and the 5 or more passes at A* - C grades was in the highest 5% nationally. Overall boys and girls attain equally well and in 1999 boys' results were very high in comparison with the national average. The national trend in average total points score per pupil is rising. At Parkside the trend is below this, but the college is sustaining its exceptionally high performance. The college achieved the targets set for GCSE in 1999 and should achieve the targets set for 2000. The college should consider setting more challenging targets in future. Observation of lessons and pupils' work during the inspection show that the standards being achieved in Key Stage 3 are above national expectations in all subjects and well above in Key Stage 4, particularly in art and geography. Pupils also achieve high standards in GCSE history, IT, design and technology, French and music.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils work with enthusiasm and are keen to do well. They are

	proud of the college and enjoy talking to visitors and showing them their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: pupils behave well in lessons and around the college at breaks, lunchtimes and when moving between sites.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: the college provides well for pupils' personal development. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and their teachers are a strength of the college and contribute to successful learning.
Attendance	Good: the attendance rate is above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Pupils are punctual to college and to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very Good

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

The teaching was good or better in 76% of lessons. In 34% it was very good and in 8% it was excellent. There is virtually no unsatisfactory teaching in the college. There were limited opportunities to observe lessons in Key Stage 4. Nevertheless evidence, including pupils' work, suggests that the quality of teaching is better in Key Stage 4 than it is at Key Stage 3. This leads to effective learning, particularly in Key Stage 4.

The quality of teaching in English is very good and sometimes excellent because pupils are frequently challenged and inspired by teaching, which is imaginative, creative and innovative. Overall the quality of teaching in mathematics is good and sometimes very good or excellent. Teachers use many different teaching strategies and share a wide view of the nature of mathematics. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory and often better, especially in Key Stage 4 because teachers have good subject knowledge high expectations and plan their lessons to include a variety of learning activities. There were examples of good teaching in all curriculum areas with the best teaching seen in English, mathematics, geography, information and communications technology (ICT) and religious education. The quality of teaching of literacy skills is good, and the teaching of numeracy skills is very good. ICT is used widely and effectively. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning when teachers differentiate work for them. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is very good. There are very few weaknesses in teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. the curriculum is appropriate for the needs of the pupils and meets the specialist status of the college well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: all pupils on the college's special educational needs code of practice register receive good support, which enables them to access the full curriculum and achieve some academic success.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good: pupils receive good support from teachers and other staff, as well as their peers, to help them access the full curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and	Good: provision for pupils' personal, social and moral development is very good. Provision for pupils cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory.

cultural development	
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: pupils are very well known to staff. Systems to monitor academic and personal development are sufficiently organised and detailed.

The curriculum is enriched by the college's specialist media arts technology and community status. Staff are pro-active in seeking opportunities to promote this aspect of the college. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities and study takes place, allowing additional subjects to be following at GCSE and Latin to be studied. A large number of cultural and social visits take place, including residential opportunities. The provision of an extensive work experience programme provides a good personal development opportunity for all Year 10 pupils and adds to their success at GCSE. The recent development of key skills work is effective. The college's links with parents are good. Parents have noticed the recent improvements in communications between the college and home and feel that they are able to approach the teachers with their concerns. Parents make a valuable contribution to their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the principal has a very clear improvement agenda, which is shared by the senior management team, the governors and the staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: the governors are very well informed about the college and have a good understanding of the strength and the areas where it needs to develop. They are prepared to challenge.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: the principal has improved the monitoring and evaluation of the college's performance.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: financial planning is closely linked to priorities in the development plan, additional resources are allocated appropriately to enhance the curriculum and principles of best value are rigorously applied.

The college's main strength in leadership and management is the clear and unequivocal commitment of the principal to raising standards further and improving the quality of education. This is supported by the governors and senior management team. Most subjects are well managed, with particular strengths in English, mathematics, science and humanities. The provision for careers, personal and social education and special educational needs are also very well managed.

The college has sufficient, suitably well-qualified staff to teach the curriculum and an effective team of support staff. The accommodation has improved greatly since the last inspection as the college has been entirely rebuilt. The building is very clean and is maintained well. Resources for learning are adequate in most curriculum areas. The college applies the principles of best value rigorously to its management of finances.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college makes the children become mature, caring and responsible citizens. The college ethos promotes children's social development and encourages life-long learning skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consistency with which homework is set. The quality of written communication from the college. The organisation of parents' evenings. The quality of teaching in modern foreign

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards attained in examinations without placing children under undue pressure. • The good teaching overall. • The success that the college achieves. • The recent improvements in the college, including the accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> languages. • The recognition of the learning difficulties of some children.
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The inspection team agrees with the matters that please parents. Homework is set in accordance with the college's homework timetable but some subjects in Key Stage 3 do not appear on this timetable. The use of homework journals is generally very effective. However, the quality of homework varies between teachers and departments. Parents receive sufficient information from the college. The Principal is standardising and improving the quality of communication from the college. The quality of teaching in modern foreign languages seen on the inspection was satisfactory, however the incidence of good teaching was lower than in other departments in the school. The learning difficulties of pupils are recognised and met well.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1 The 1999 Key Stage 3 SAT results were well above the national average in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools to Parkside, the results were well above the national average in mathematics and science and broadly in line with the national average in English. The overall level of attainment has been sustained over a three-year period. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels in all three core subjects was above the national average. Parkside pupils are making almost four terms' more progress in mathematics and science and almost two and a half times more progress in English than pupils do nationally. The performance of boys and girls is equally high. Nationally girls attain much higher than boys do in English. This is not the case at Parkside, where the boys almost match the girls. This is a significant achievement for the English department.

2 The percentage of pupils who attained five or more higher grade GCSEs and the average number of GCSE points scored by pupils are well above the national average and very high compared with similar schools. This attainment places Parkside in the top 5% of schools nationally. The percentage of pupils who attained five or more and one or more GCSE passes was above the national average and above the average for similar schools. The overall level of attainment has been sustained over a three-year period. Last year, boys' results were particularly high. Since the previous inspection, boys' attainment has risen more rapidly than it has nationally, which is an improvement in the college. This is due, in part, to the setting of specific targets to raise boys' attainment in art, drama and media studies. Teaching styles which promote boys' learning, like the use of ICT and media technology, have also been developed since the previous inspection.

3 Results in GCSE English and English Literature are significantly above the national averages. The percentage of pupils entered for English Literature is higher than it is nationally. In contrast to the end of Key Stage 3 tests, pupils attain higher in English than in mathematics or science, indicating a faster rate of progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Although boys do not attain as highly as girls, the gap is significantly smaller than it is nationally. In GCSE mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C is very high in comparison with the national average. The distribution of results has improved, with more pupils attaining B grades and the lower-attaining pupils improving their standards. Results in GCSE combined science are significantly above the national average. They are above the national average in biology and physics and close to the national average in chemistry. The biology and physics results have improved since the previous inspection.

4 GCSE results were well above the national average in art and geography, where many pupils attain the highest grades. History results have improved since the last inspection, with more pupils attaining higher grades. Results in information technology (IT) have continued to improve. In design and technology, the proportion of pupils obtaining higher grades was above the national average, although overall pupils tend to do less well in this area than in other areas of the curriculum. Girls achieve more highly than boys do and the best results were in textiles and resistant materials. Attainment in GCSE French was well above the national average and broadly in line with the national average in GCSE German. Girls attain more highly than boys in French. Standards in GCSE music are good.

5 The college exceeded its target for GCSE in 1999. The targets for 2000 have been agreed with the Local Education Authority but appear modest. The college recognises this

and believes that improvements in target-setting practice since the appointment of the new principal will result in more realistic targets being set for 2001.

6 Observations of lessons and pupils' work during the inspection show that the standards being achieved in Key Stage 3 are above national expectations in all subjects and well above in Key Stage 4. Standards of speaking and listening are excellent in both English and across the curriculum, with pupils frequently using sophisticated and mature language. In mathematics pupils have good problem-solving skills and are able to talk clearly about their work. Standards of work in science are high. Pupils understand key scientific ideas, tackle practical work confidently and use their investigative skills well. In art standards are high and pupils develop strong, imaginative images in their compositional work. Pupils make good progress in design and technology. The overall standard of work in geography is very good and extension work in Key Stage 3 for the most able contributes to high standards in GCSE. Standards in history are good, with considerable strength in pupils' ability to carry out investigative research. Standards in modern foreign languages are in line with national expectations and some achieve above the national expectations. This was the case in the last inspection. Standards in music and physical education are in line with national expectations. In religious education standards are high, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

7 Pupils enter the college with high literacy skills. The college is effective in developing the quality of independent reading and pupils develop higher order skills across a range of genres and texts. Pupils read aloud with increasing sophistication and with empathy. Pupils are skilled at using non-fiction texts as a source of materials for research projects, for example to develop their understanding of the local history of Cambridge. Their fluency in spoken standard English provides a very strong foundation for the development of writing skills. The small numbers of pupils, who need targeted literacy teaching, achieve well.

8 Pupils numeracy skills are very good. They can cope well with the demands of work in other subjects for example, science, design and technology and geography. Pupils' achievements in ICT are impressive. Attainment in the practical use of ICT is very high because a number of departments make very effective uses of it within their subject areas and the college is very effective in developing pupils' confidence and skills.

9 Pupils' attainment when they enter the college is above the national average. When they leave at aged 16 their attainment is well above the national average. This means that pupils achieve well during their time at the college. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress, which accelerates as they move through the college. They do well in GCSE, virtually all attaining one or more subjects. The college targets gifted and talented pupils and most teachers provide them with challenging learning activities so they are able to demonstrate fluent, expressive and mature writing with an excellent vocabulary, including the correct use of technical language. Pupils achieve a high number of A* and A grades, notably in geography and art. Pupils who have English as an additional language attain high standards because of the very good, targeted, individual support they receive.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 The previous report made very positive comments about pupils' attitudes and behaviour and this continues to be the case. The pupils show a great deal of enthusiasm for the college and have very positive attitudes to their work, to extra-curricular activities and clubs. They say they enjoy their time in college. During lessons and in discussions

they are keen to learn, willingly explain their work and are confident to ask and answer questions and express opinions. They listen well to instructions from adults and are keen to succeed. They are well motivated and work at a good pace.

11 Pupils behave well in the classroom, around the school and in the street as they move between the sites or leave at the end of the day. They show respect to adults and their surroundings. When, occasionally, there are instances of unacceptable behaviour, they are dealt with effectively and unobtrusively. The number of temporary exclusions has fallen this year. The college has a very good atmosphere for learning and is a friendly place. Relationships amongst pupils and with adults are very good.

12 Pupils' personal development is very good. As they progress through college they are increasingly able to work cooperatively. They work well in pairs or groups and are confident in front of the class. They listen attentively to instructions and are considerate of others' points of view. They are closely involved in discussing their own progress, generally know how well they are doing and contribute to the setting of their own targets. They make good use of their journals to record the completion of key skills, responding well to opportunities to show independence and personal responsibility. Pupils value these opportunities very highly and feel they benefit from them. They willingly undertake a wide range of duties such as receptionists, peer counsellors and senior students and contribute to the organisation of the college through membership of the council. They value work experience and the chance to work in the community and support a number of charities. Pupils have good study skills and are responsible young people by the time they move on to higher education or work. Parents comment that their older children have enjoyed continued success as a result of being a pupil at Parkside.

13 Pupils with Special Educational Needs display good attitudes and are fully integrated into the life of the college. They respond well to the opportunities provided to take part in all aspects of classroom work. They are treated well, enjoy school and show increasing confidence in themselves as learners as they move up the college. The level of attendance is above the national average and there are fewer unauthorised absences than nationally.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14 There were examples of good or better teaching in all curriculum areas with the best teaching seen in English, mathematics, geography, and ICT in both key stages and in religious education in Key Stage 3. The evidence of pupils' written work suggests the quality of teaching in media studies in Key Stage 4 is very good. There is virtually no unsatisfactory teaching.

15 At the time of the last inspection, one in ten lessons observed had some shortcomings in important areas. Teaching was judged to be better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 3 good features were noted in art, classical studies, geography and religious education. Since the last inspection teaching has improved in Key Stage 3 as, in addition to these subjects, teaching is now good or better in English, mathematics, design and technology, ICT and history. Pupils' written work and the limited amount of observation in Key Stage 4 indicates that teaching is still better in Key Stage 4.

16 The proportion of teaching which is very good or better is significantly higher in Years 8 and 9 than it is in Year 7. Learning becomes more effective in Year 9 due to pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour. The pace of teaching accelerates as pupils move through the school and there is a clearer focus on learning objectives.

17 Teachers have good and often very good subject knowledge and understanding, which they use very well to promote pupils' learning. In many subjects teachers give expositions and demonstrations of skills and techniques. In art and in design and technology, this enables pupils to have a clear idea of what they have to do to improve their level of skills. Clear learning objectives in history, geography and RE help pupils to understand the learning expectations placed upon them. Planning is a particular strength of many departments especially science, geography and RE. In learning support lessons a wide range of teaching methods enthuses pupils. This results in effective learning. However, planning, although satisfactory, is less effective in music because organisational detail is not clearly focused and in physical education because checks to ensure pupils' understanding of what it is they have to do are sometimes missing.

18 Lesson planning is imaginative, adventurous, involves and encourages group work and the use of ICT and media technology. Teaching methods are almost always good or better throughout the subject areas. Lesson planning and the choice of teaching methods encourage pupils to apply intellectual and creative effort to their work and show considerable self reliance. The increasing use of ICT within pupils' work is a strength of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and RE. The use of media technology is good in English, mathematics, geography and RE. A strong feature of teaching in English, geography and RE is the good match between individuals learning needs and the learning activity, which allows new knowledge to be acquired well. Assessment processes are integrated into pupils' work in geography and RE providing a model of successful practice from which many other departments can learn.

19 In virtually all lessons, the management of pupils and the development of positive attitudes to work is good. Relationships are very good and teachers know their pupils well, have high expectations for their behaviour, their responses to their work and their achievement. As a result, most pupils readily involve themselves in lessons, work at a good pace and take responsibility for their own learning. In a music lesson, a group of pupils played to each other and then evaluated their respective performances effectively. In design & technology, science, art and PE practical activities are undertaken safely and creatively, as a direct consequence of pupils' good behaviour. Within English, because the management of pupils is excellent, some very effective group work takes place for example when pupils discuss issues like the connection between horror films and violence. In modern foreign languages, when behaviour is well managed, pupils can engage successfully in group work involving a sequence of exchanges in French. In mathematics fifty-six pupils engaged very successfully in group work presentations because pupils were very clear about the purpose of the activity.

20 Time and resources are generally used well. The college building creates a positive environment in which to learn. In PE, teaching time is sometimes lost due to late arrival of the pupils and consequently the quality of learning suffers. Good pace in lessons is evident in English, science, design & technology geography and RE where the use of timed activities is effective in developing pupils' response. In PSHE the very effective use of a video on eating disorders enabled learning within the lesson to be relevant, informative and managed with a good pace. A geography lesson on energy resources was challenging and developmental, with pupils working with a CD Rom and the internet.

21 Throughout lessons pupils acquire new knowledge and skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding well. In English, there is impressive development of the quality of language. In history pupils' use of mime and song in an activity based on the Sheffield Outrages had a positive impact on learning. A design and technology lesson in

Year 8 enabled good development of the control and use of design equipment. In mathematics pupils provided sensible ideas about the concept of direction and distance because teachers' perceptive use of questioning and innovative planning aided the successful acquisition of new work.

22 Where teaching is relatively less successful it is because assessment and marking and the setting of homework lack rigour and assessment is not used well to inform planning for classes, groups and individual pupils. A whole-school policy relating to assessment is in place but at present, assessment practices are inconsistent. In English, ICT, geography, RE and art, formative assessment through interaction between teachers and individual pupils does take place and is used effectively to help indicate to pupils how they can improve their work. Teachers of these subjects also use assessment effectively to inform their own planning for pupils' future work. Within other subject departments, the quality and use of assessment is underdeveloped and the quality of marking to aid pupils' progress is inconsistent. Attainment and progress grades are compiled for each pupil twice a year and are generally used effectively in pupils' personal learning planning with their tutors. However, this information is used inconsistently by subject departments to help pupils individually or to improve curriculum planning.

23 Homework is set in accordance with the college's homework timetable, which does not include art and music in Key Stage 3. However, there is a lack of consistency in the quality and quantity of homework both within and across departments. Where homework is most effective it promotes learning by reinforcing and extending what is learned in lessons.

24 The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good and the teaching of discrete groups of pupils within the learning support department is very good. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are briefed and prepared particularly well by the college's head of learning support. In mathematics and art, teachers plan closely with the LSAs and the impact of this is evident in the quality of understanding and level of attainment of pupils. However, planning with subject department staff is inconsistent across the college and this was an issue on the last inspection. The teaching of basic skills is always good and, in addition to using them naturally, subject teachers are becoming more aware of their role in developing them.

25 Since the last inspection the college has made progress in the key issues related to teaching and learning. It recognises the need for the further development of assessment so that it informs lesson planning so pupils make more progress.

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

26 The college provides a very good, broad range of worthwhile learning opportunities which meets the interests, aptitudes and needs of the pupils. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the time allocation for religious education in Year 8 and an ethics and religion course has been introduced for all pupils in Key Stage 4. This ensures that the requirements of the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus are met. There has been a substantial increase in the provision for vocational education with the introduction of work shadowing in Year 8, an enhancement of the work experience programme in Year 10, the introduction of key skills in Years 9,10 and 11 and a vocational programme in Year 11. The provision for ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection. ICT has become an integral tool used by pupils and staff to support learning.

27 The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education together with a well-structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 provides a wide curriculum entitlement, with choice within each subject area, ICT, careers education and guidance (CEG) and community aspects which are taught on a rotation basis with ethics and religion. An enhancement programme enables pupils to extend their opportunities, both to examination level or to follow an interest. The arts college focus on media technology enhances the whole curriculum because it gives relevance through its use of popular culture. Strengths of the curriculum include an adventurous approach, for example, using the internet effectively to extend the scope of learning, use of role play and empathy to draw out meaning and the integration of media studies, drama and PSHE with English, so that each aspect is made richer, resulting in a positive impact, particularly for boys. There are some isolated good examples of multicultural education but it is not planned systematically.

28 The college curriculum is at a point of transition. The present curriculum has been reviewed during the current academic year resulting in a realistic assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a clear rationale for the future curriculum, which takes account of the length of the school day, the length of individual lessons, the number of lessons and the introduction of an extended programme in Key Stage 4. The college will need to review the introduction of the revised curriculum to ensure the strengths of the present curriculum are maintained, as well as assessing the benefits of the changes made.

29 The college is establishing a coherent strategy for the improvement of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and appropriate plans are included within the 2000 to 2003 strategic plan. Following visits to local primary schools, the English department is beginning to identify the implications for literacy teaching and learning at the college. The learning support department provides targeted programmes for individual pupils, aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills.

30 A very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities continue to be available. These opportunities are valued by pupils and contribute to their intellectual, physical and creative development. Year 7 pupils work at a local primary school, writing and producing books for pupils in infant classes and visits take place as part of the classical studies course in Key Stage 4. Each day there is a good programme of activities, including for example, drama, a rock band, volleyball and cookery. Pupils value the School Council. Their participation influences decisions made by the college, for example, in relation to the catering arrangements. The quality of study support is very good and is increasingly valued by pupils as they progress through the college. This includes a homework club, a study skills conference and revision classes undertaken during examination leave. A new post has been established to support teaching and learning which will help improve study skills. The college has a clear rationale for the development of extra-curricular activities and has a good understanding about day-to-day practice. However, there is no systematic planned monitoring and evaluation of this provision to assess its contribution to raising pupils' attainment. The college provides a good open-access extra-curricular sports programme with opportunities for pupils to experience competition at all levels through inter-form and inter-school matches and tournaments.

31 The curriculum is socially inclusive ensuring equality of access and opportunity. This aspect of the college is valued highly by pupils and parents and is a significant strength. The college has an effective equal opportunities policy. The majority of classes are successfully organised on a mixed-ability basis. This approach to the organisation of classes, together with the many whole-college activities, linked to a well-established

awareness of gender and race, supports inclusion well. The provision for special educational needs and English as an additional language enables pupils to access the full curriculum. The provision for children in public care was identified as excellent practice during a recent review undertaken by HMI, as part of a national survey.

32 The arrangements for monitoring the attainment and progress of boys and girls are improving with the introduction of more systematic arrangements. The gender balance in teaching groups has improved since the last inspection and the college successfully encourages pupils to work together in mixed-gender contexts. Although the college receives appropriate assessment data from partner primary schools, it is not used systematically to monitor and assess the progress of groups of pupils.

33 Provision for PSHE is good. This has been rearranged since the last inspection. On a number of occasions the timetable is collapsed to undertake a range of activities, for example, work shadowing, health and fitness and a study-skills conference. Departments contribute effectively to PSHE, for example in Year 7, through considering healthy eating in design and technology and smoking, in Year 9, as part of science. There is good provision for health and sex education together with appropriate attention to drug misuse. These sensitive areas are covered well in a limited amount of time. Pupils value PSHE which makes a significant contribution to their preparation for adult life. A few areas need extending, in particular, understanding of democratic systems and economic and industrial understanding. The introduction of citizenship next year will provide a framework for such developments. Some aspects of provision have been monitored and evaluated, such as sex education, and this has led to improvements. Such monitoring and evaluation activities should continue.

34 In Key Stage 4 the quality of the work-related curriculum, which includes careers education and guidance, is very good. It prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and working life and is having a positive impact on standards. Pupils experience a work-shadowing programme in Year 8. There is appropriate preparation for Key Stage 4 in Year 9 and a two-week work experience programme in Year 10. Additionally pupils undertake an Insight into Industry enterprise activity and a taster day at the local further education college together with a discrete CEG programme to prepare for post-16 choices. There are good links established with the media industry and links with business are being extended through the recently-established business partnership. There is a good working relationship with the local careers service and the college is currently working towards a quality accreditation mark for CEG. The careers library is well used by pupils and is effective. The English department successfully integrates the work-experience programme within the GCSE assessment arrangements and the design and technology and RE departments effectively support the work-related curriculum.

35 Key skills have been introduced from Year 9 onwards. Visual literacy has been added as an additional key skill in order to enable media technology to be recognised effectively. The next stage of development should be the integration of key skills within subject schemes of work. Pupils value and understand the purpose of key skills and are achieving levels of attainment in line with national expectations. In Year 11 a small number of pupils follow a work-related programme which brings together two modules of work at the local further education college with additional provision from the local careers service and a media course involving the production of a programme for a local cable television company. The response of pupils to this programme has been positive and a recent HMI visit acknowledged that the programme is well organised and managed. This will be extended next year.

36 Community education is of a very good quality and contributes to the intellectual and personal development of pupils and adult learners in the local and wider community. Pupils have access to a wide range of activities within the school day such as the “Challenge” programme in Year 10, which involves all pupils working with members of the wider community to organise, run and evaluate a project. Links through the media include working with a charity to produce a theatre production with adults. Extra-curricular provision is considerably enhanced through, for example, after-school drama classes and youth art groups. The enhancement programme successfully extends the curriculum beyond the school day. Community education is an integral part of the life of the college and is one of the key priorities within the recently published strategic plan. There is a clear vision and appropriate structures and systems with quality assurance arrangements in place. The governing body is fully involved in the work of the lifelong learning programme.

37 The college has good liaison arrangements with the partner primary schools on pastoral and general transfer issues. Subject curriculum links, with the exception of English, are insufficiently developed. Although departments, particularly English, use examples of pupils’ Year 6 work to support planning when pupils begin in Year 7, attainment data is not used effectively to inform planning and teaching. The college provides a well-structured programme, impartial guidance and advice to ensure pupils are well prepared for post-16 choices. Each pupil receives a statement giving their educational and personal achievements and prepares their own Progress File. Tracking arrangements with the local 6th Form colleges record the progress pupils make. The college has joined a pilot programme with the local careers service to ensure that similar information is available for pupils attending the further education college and other destinations.

38 Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Arrangements for meeting specific individual education plan (IEP) targets, particularly in literacy, are carefully planned to ensure minimum disruption to pupils’ learning in other subjects. An opportunity for a small number of Year 11 pupils to be involved in a pre-vocational experience at a local college of further education is effective.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39 The college cares for all of its pupils well and the care of pupils who are on the college Code of Practice register for special educational needs is very good. Their needs are clearly identified and recorded on their Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which are disseminated to all staff. Helpful information related to types of learning they need are made available to all staff by the school’s special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). There is a good match between the needs identified in the pupils’ statements and provision. The monitoring and reviewing of pupils’ progress within their IEP targets is very good and helps pupils make progress with their particular difficulties. The college makes particularly effective use of a range of external support to ensure pupils receive appropriate specific learning support needs. All pupils with special needs have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

40 Teachers know all pupils well, individually and are aware of their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils and parents know that staff will respond to their needs when required and this supports their learning.

41 The staff who have direct responsibility for guidance and support are strongly committed to the health and well-being of the college’s young people. Effective procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are in place. There are clear and successful

arrangements to ensure that the environment is kept safe, clean and free from hazards. The health and safety issues from the previous inspection have been eliminated. Pupils move safely around the college and between sites. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid and access to both first aid and medical resources are readily available. Child protection procedures are fully met.

42 Good attendance and behaviour are rewarded and pupils value this. The reward system includes the use of merits, form prizes, certificates, the principals' awards and governors' awards. These are well known to pupils and are eagerly sought after. The effective code of conduct makes clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and is reviewed annually. Positive attitudes are encouraged and prevail and the college ethos is consequently inclusive and developmental.

43 Well-thought-out pastoral intervention plans are being introduced to support the learning needs of the small minority who behave unacceptably. The college works effectively with the education welfare officer to follow up cases of poor attendance and punctuality. An anti-bullying policy is in place and the pupils form a successful counselling group, which supports positively the very occasional pupil, who is harassed.

44 Support for pupils when they transfer to Parkside is effective. These arrangements have become increasingly good. Liaison with the partner schools is detailed and very effective for pupils with special educational needs.

45 Effective procedure are in place for supporting pupils' educational and vocational guidance at the ends of both key stages. Pupils are supported well in their work experience placements. Mentoring is successful for pupils at Stages 3 to 5 on the SEN Code of Practice register and for a group of Year 11 pupils with particular subject concerns, identified through the attainment and progress assessment process.

46 The college's systems for assessing and guiding pupils' attainment and progress are in the process of being refined. As yet, not all departments use information about pupils' attainment and progress to plan the next stages of learning. Assessment information for each pupil is available and is used successfully by tutors in the regular, termly, personal planning interviews. In these pupils' progress is reviewed and personal targets for academic and social development are set. These are usually of a general nature and rarely focus upon subject-specific developments. Pupils value this process and are clear that it has a positive impact on their learning and progress. The inspection confirms the recent positive endorsement of the personal learning planning interview process by an external validator.

47 Within departments, the use of assessment which informs teaching and guides pupils' progress and learning is applied inconsistently, particularly in Key Stage 3. More precise target setting is needed thereby complementing the personal learning planning discussions with tutors. Elements of weak assessment practice were identified in the last report. The college has worked hard to make progress in this area but acknowledges the need to continue to develop practice. Although good practice exists within some subject areas, it does not provide enough information to assess pupils' subject-specific skills in a coherent pattern across the college.

48 Parents receive good information about their child's progress and attainment. Reports are positive and encouraging and meet with statutory requirements. Teachers' comments are generally helpful and include reference to pupils' strengths and weaknesses in addition to assessments about what they know and can do. Pupils are also encouraged,

with the support of their teachers, to complete a self assessment in their reports, in order to identify what they have done well and to target areas for improvement. The effectiveness of this process depends greatly upon the quality of the subject-specific report comments. Parental consultation evenings support pupils in their learning through the sharing of parents' and teachers' views and concerns and the consideration of development possibilities. Homework journals are used well by most pupils to record their homework and other college-related matters. In Years 9,10 and 11 the journals are also used to promote the concept of key skills development in all areas of the college.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 Parents and carers hold positive views about what the college achieves for their children. They are satisfied with the standards and progress achieved. They feel that teachers work hard and are approachable if a problem needs to be discussed and have positive views about how the college promotes the right values and encourages their children to work hard. Parents value the fact that the college sets high academic standards but also aspires to produce good citizens.

50 Links with parents are effective. Parents receive a varied and very good range of information about current matters and their child's progress, which helps them to make a contribution to learning, as set out in the home-school agreement.

51 When their children first join the college, parents are invited to induction meetings and receive good quality documents describing the organisation and the curriculum, in addition to the well-written prospectus. They receive frequent newsletters and a range of letters and information directly from class tutors and heads of year. In Years 10 and 11, these are of a very high standard. The college intends to ensure this standard is met across all year groups. There are occasional seminars on current issues, as well as those dealing more specifically with subject options in Year 9 and, later, career choices. Each term, parents receive a copy of a progress report for their child, setting out standards achieved in subjects and personal targets. All parents have the opportunity for formal consultations with their child's tutor. Annual records of achievement are of a good standard and describe the work that pupils have done, what they have achieved, their strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Parents of pupils with special educational needs receive very good information about the content and progress of individual education plans. All the required links with parents related to pupils on the Code of Practice register are fully and effectively met. There are few opportunities for informal contacts with parents during the college day but teachers make themselves available for discussions whenever required.

52 The college has developed its own web site which contains a considerable amount of information about the college and the wide range of its work. This is an increasingly important channel of communication with parents and a potentially valuable aid by which pupils can continue their learning and research at home. These developments are in keeping with the college's media arts status.

53 Parents make a valuable contribution to their children's education. They ensure that they attend college regularly so levels of attendance are above the national average. Some parents are able to help in lessons where they have special skills or knowledge. All parents are encouraged to help their children's work at home and they show their commitment each week by their signature and comments in the journals. The college's drama and musical events are well attended and supported by parents. There is an active parents and friends association, whose enthusiasts work hard to raise funds which directly benefit pupils in the classroom, as well as by the funding of residential visits. Parents'

efforts to organise social events are equally important.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

54 The main strength of leadership and management is the clear and unequivocal commitment of the principal to raising standards and improving the quality of education in the college further. He is supported in this by the senior management team, known in the college as the leadership group, and governors. The most significant and rapid change in the college has been since the appointment of the current principal in September 1999. His management of change is very effective, and has led to the college regaining a shared sense of purpose.

55 The senior management team provides able support for the principal. They have a shared understanding of college improvement and welcome change. The senior staff are clear about their responsibilities and their roles are defined appropriately. They are linked to designated departments and will provide a key role in the monitoring and evaluating of departmental performance through the newly introduced triennial reviews. The role of one of the senior managers is being redefined so she can develop effective monitoring systems and promote the development of good teaching and learning.

56 The governing body is exceptionally knowledgeable about education generally and current educational issues. They know the strengths and areas for development in the college very well and are aware of specific concerns which parents have. Many of the governors are parents of children attending the college. They are fully involved in strategic development planning in the college and agree strongly with the direction in which the college now needs to move, providing the principal with good support. They are frequently involved in training activities alongside the staff and appreciate the greater detail that the new principal is giving them on standards which should be achieved in the college. All governors are linked to an area of the college, which is appreciated by the staff. They have a great pride in the achievements of the college, especially the new accommodation and the media arts technology status. Of particular importance to them is that pupils are articulate, confident, self-reliant and well prepared for the next phase of learning and adult life when they leave the college.

57 Overall the management and leadership of departments is good, with some examples of very good practice in English, mathematics, science, and humanities. The leadership and management of work-related learning is good with effective arrangements to assess the impact on learning and attitudes. Where the leadership and management of departments are very good, standards are at their highest because there is a team-work approach, which leads to a shared commitment to raising standards and improving the quality of education.

58 The management and leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are highly effective, with clear and detailed procedures in place. The pastoral system is well led and managed and makes a significant contribution to sustaining high standards. The systems in place to support the care of pupils are monitored and reviewed consistently and effectively. Many parents comment on the value of the rapid response to their children's concerns from the pastoral staff. The special needs and pastoral management of the college are at the forefront of the college's inclusive approach.

59 Monitoring and evaluation have developed significantly since the appointment of the new principal, who has initiated triennial reviews. These are collaborative activities involving the senior management team, the attached governor and the department

manager in observing lessons and working together to make judgements on the quality of teaching. Targets are set which form the starting point for the next review. At the time of the inspection only one review had been carried out, of the mathematics department. This was thorough, identifying the strengths and areas for development in the department clearly. Although the process is in its early stages of development, the commitment to the process shown by the principal, governors and staff indicate the likelihood of its success in improving teaching and learning. Departments have been using YELLIS [Year 11 information systems] for some time to monitor their own performance and, this year, have started to use (CATs) cognitive ability tests. This will ensure that departments have an evidence base from which they can assess how the quality of the teaching adds to the standards that pupils are predicted to attain. In addition, monitoring is conducted through the targets set for phase 1 of the arts college programme and progress is reported to the DfEE. The evaluation of phase 1 is very detailed and demonstrates the skills that exist in the college for this work. Heads of departments were monitoring pupils' work and observing lessons before the triennial reviews started. However, whilst the most effective middle managers became better informed about the quality of teaching in their curriculum areas, this was not consistent.

60 In the future, triennial reviews will inform development planning. Currently, the quality of departmental development planning is inconsistent. The new principal has outlined the college's most important educational developments in a document, which will bring about significant curriculum change agreed as necessary by the governors and staff. A three-year college development plan identifies the correct educational priorities to raise the achievement of all its pupils but with a particular focus on the most able. The successful resubmission of the arts college status is a stimulating document, which shows very well how this will improve all aspects of the college. Under the very good leadership of the principal, supported by the senior management team the college is becoming much more effective in identifying weaknesses and taking appropriate steps to overcome them.

61 The principal, the senior management team and governors put great emphasis on providing high quality teaching and learning, and this is a core aim within the college development plan. A member of the management team will be the director of teaching and learning from September. The college has an advanced-skills teacher, who ensures successful practice is developed and shared. Governors have good first-hand knowledge about teaching and learning in subject departments. The college is an effective provider of initial teacher training. Close links exist between the college and a local initial teacher-training establishment, which has benefits for pupils at the college as well as for the student teachers. The induction arrangements for new staff to the college are effective.

62 There has been a good appraisal system in the college, which included peer observation of teaching. The college understands the issues connected with performance management. The governing body has set very suitable targets for the principal in his first year in the college.

63 The college has very good systems in place for financial management and control. It makes efficient and effective use of available resources in order to pursue its educational priorities. The college is cost conscious and is applying rigorously the principles of best value to its purchases of goods and services. The use of a private contractor for financial management has been very effective. Funds made available through specialist status as a

media arts technology college, through links with initial teacher training institutions and through having an advanced-skills teacher, have been used appropriately to improve the provision for pupils at the college, in other schools and in the community.

64 The college is pro active and successful in securing sponsorship from local and national businesses and charitable institutions. These are used largely, but not exclusively, to promote the media arts technology aspect of the college. The monies from a college foundation fund are used well to allow all pupils to participate in the extra-curricular and additional activities which are offered. The recent development of a college-managed charity "Tree Arts", ensures the arts successes, currently in the performing arts, are shared with other schools in the community and beyond.

65 The college has sufficient, suitably well-qualified and experienced staff to teach the curriculum offered. Some of the advanced skills teacher's time is used appropriately to demonstrate and coach a range of teaching styles within the college. Other highly effective teachers provide good role models. The continuous professional development of the staff is related to the priorities for the whole college and individual departments. Teachers evaluate the impact of training on their daily work well. The college has a good enough range of knowledge, skills and understanding within its staff to provide some of its training in-house. Many teachers use ICT, including email and the internet, well. This improves the quality of presentation and organisation of their teaching resources and enhances the curriculum very effectively in some areas, for example mathematics and geography.

66 The quality of support provided by ICT and media technicians is very good. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to the provision for pupils with learning difficulties. When teachers liaise effectively with the learning support assistants they are well informed about the content of the lessons and the learning objectives but sometimes this does not happen. Administrative support staff provide a good service and promote the college well.

67 The accommodation has improved greatly since the last inspection as the college has been entirely rebuilt on the two original small sites. The pleasant buildings provide a positive physical environment for work. The buildings are very clean and well maintained by a private contractor. Pupils show respect for the buildings, which are entirely free of litter and graffiti, and move efficiently between them. The library is a good environment for learning and the librarian monitors its use by pupils well. Some teachers involve the librarian in lesson planning to good effect, especially in English and geography. There are some shortcomings in accommodation. Classrooms are small for the size of some classes and make group work difficult, although teachers do not let this stand in the way of using this teaching technique. There are adequate resources for learning in most curriculum areas.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68 The governing body should include the following key issues in its post-inspection action plan. They are listed in order of importance.

In order to build on progress made since the last inspection and continue to raise standards

in the college, the principal, staff and governors should

Improve the use made of assessment by:

- collecting and distributing a variety and range of assessment data and ensuring that all teachers understand how to interpret this data (paragraphs 32, 46 and 59);
- using assessment and test data to gain an overview of the likely achievement of particular groups of pupils (paragraphs 5, 47 and 129);
- ensuring that assessment and test data is used to plan lessons for whole classes, for groups of pupils within a class and for individual pupils (paragraphs 22, 47, 90, 93, 112 and 124);
- ensuring the routine marking of pupils' work is consistent across curriculum areas and between teachers in the same curriculum area and includes clearer statements of what they are achieving and more systematic advice on how they should improve (paragraphs 22 and 81).

Improve the impact of teaching on pupils' progress by:

- ensuring that teachers have the same expectations about the quantity and quality of work which pupils produce and the challenge to their learning they receive in Years 7 and 8 as they do in Years 9, 10 and 11 (paragraphs 16, 69, 72, 87 and 92);
- ensuring that homework is consistent in quality and quantity (paragraphs 22 and 23).

Improve the consistency of routine and regular reviewing, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and teaching by:

- securing the triennial review process (paragraph 59);
- setting up a more rigorous system of annual departmental review by middle managers, which evaluates attainment in examinations and work in class, homework and teaching (paragraphs 30, 59 and 90).

Improving the consistency of development planning in departments by:

- ensuring a close link with whole-college development planning (paragraph 60);

The following issues are of lesser importance but should also be considered by the school:

- improve the consistency of planning between subject departments and the learning support department (paragraph 24);
- develop more subject curriculum links with partner primary schools (paragraph 37).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	131
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	34	34	23	1	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	603
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	130

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	34

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	62	56	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	47	46
	Girls	46	44	42
	Total	86	91	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (80)	77 (77)	74.5 (81)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	59 (56)	56 (59)	47 (24)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	53	40
	Girls	52	50	36
	Total	97	103	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (75)	87 (77)	64 (55)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	63.5 (54.6)	57.6 (58.8)	33 (24.3)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	63	61	124

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	44	61	62
	Girls	45	53	54
	Total	89	114	116
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	73 (59)	97.4 (92.0)	99.2 (97)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	50.8 (45.5)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	4
Indian	3
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	7
White	492
Any other minority ethnic group	10

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	2	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	32	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	449

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	29.2
Key Stage 4	21.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1991273
Total expenditure	2010149
Expenditure per pupil	2998
Balance brought forward from previous year	71128
Balance carried forward to next year	52252

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	603
Number of questionnaires returned	90

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	42	12	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	53	7	4	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	57	13	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	49	26	8	4
The teaching is good.	18	68	7	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	47	15	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	32	8	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	46	10	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	52	24	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	23	57	4	2	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	44	9	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	30	23	8	12

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES
ENGLISH

69 In the end of Key Stage 3 tests, pupils' attainment was well above the national average for all schools, although broadly in line with similar schools. For the second year running, the results for boys were relatively better than those for girls, compared with schools nationally. Pupils' performance in English is less successful than that in mathematics and science and has declined relative to the performance of other schools nationally since 1997. This has been identified as an area for development by the department, which plans to address the weaker elements of the Year 7 and 8 curriculum in order to effect faster progress for pupils. At the end of Key Stage 4, in GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C was very high and significantly above national averages for both English and English Literature. The percentage of pupils entered for English Literature is well above the national average. In contrast to the end of Key Stage 3 tests, pupils perform better in English than in science and maths, indicating a much faster rate of progress in Key Stage 4. The department has sustained high attainment in GCSE since 1997 and although the boys do not perform as well as the girls, the gap is significantly smaller than it is nationally. The department has, therefore, had considerable success in addressing the issue of the under-performance of boys, raised in the previous inspection report.

70 The department is distinguished by its imaginative and adventurous teaching approaches, notably in Years 9 to 11. Schemes of work integrate drama, media studies and PSE work with English, to the mutual enrichment of each. For example, a Year 9 lesson on the opening of 'Animal Farm' used the pupils to represent the animals gathering to hear Old Major's speech and through the humour of this, gained a rare quality of still attention for the Major's words. Through the voice of the teacher, Orwell's language was then made magically alive. In a Year 7 lesson that included the school's PSHE module on puberty, the teaching of appropriate and inappropriate language enabled the pupils to deal with sensitive issues in a very mature way.

71 The department has been highly innovative in developing approaches to the study of the media which stimulate and challenge the pupils to improve their skills in English. This is grounded in the teachers' strongly secure subject knowledge and their understanding and planning, which is detailed and thorough, although at times, a lack of focus to the learning objectives in Key Stage 3 affects the quality of the lessons. The units of work in Years 9-11 are stimulating and challenging, requiring rigorous thinking from the pupils, which they relish. The level of dialogue between teacher and pupils is often rich as a result. For example, an excellent Year 9 lesson on the horror genre, which applied a clear conceptual framework to horror conventions in the cinema, evoked insights from the pupils which were of 'A' level quality. This kind of critical analysis involves other aspects of English and transforms the work of some pupils, notably boys.

72 In Years 7 and 8, however, the level of challenge is more variable. In Year 8, pupils respond enthusiastically to the work on 'Of Mice and Men', showing a great deal of empathy with the plight of Lennie and demonstrating understanding of the historical context of the novel. The character of Crooks is highlighted during the unit of work, and teachers focus, at all times on the language that Steinbeck uses to create his effects. Work on poetry in Years 7 and 8 is disappointing, however, lacking a clear focus to the teaching and producing lacklustre written outcomes. To some extent, this is due to the need to build more firmly on pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2. In general, however, a strength of the

department is the quality of its processes of self-evaluation. Every aspect of its working is underpinned by a careful rationale and is reviewed regularly. A priority for development in Key Stage 3 is the use of more material, which reflects the multicultural nature of modern Britain. Documentation is very good, containing a great deal of practical advice, including some excellent initial teacher training (ITT) material.

73 Lessons move at a very brisk pace and are resourced well by the department's own materials, reflecting the presence of ICT in English work. These materials are of a high quality and are thoughtfully customised to be pupil friendly. They are one factor in the excellent engagement of pupils with work in English. Pupils are interested, well motivated and keen, working at a fast pace without sacrificing quality. The ability of nearly all pupils to talk clearly about their own learning is a mark of teaching, which is frequently good and often better. Pupils with special needs are supported extremely well, both through support staff in the classroom and through the highly detailed knowledge that each teacher has of these pupils. They progress well through both key stages and in Key Stage 4 are able to write cogently-argued pieces in response to challenging questions on texts such as 'Macbeth'. This shows improvement since the previous inspection.

74 Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language are supported very well, producing work consonant with their ability. This is largely owing to good-quality schemes of work, which are planned to suit different learning styles and therefore provide a number of access points to the particular learning involved. Pupils are grouped carefully in mixed-ability teaching groups, which are effective in supporting all pupils and are valued by higher-attaining pupils for the range of interests which they provide. Pupils treat the excellent group work responsibly and in a cooperative spirit, which strengthens their social skills.

75 Assessment in Key Stage 4 is very good, providing a clear picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses judged against clear criteria, including pupils' oral skills. As part of the process, pupils set their own targets linked to the objectives of the task. In Year 9, assessment is good in response to criticism in the previous inspection report. In Years 7 and 8, however, it is weaker, including inconsistency in approaches to marking pupils' work and a lack of helpful guidance as to how to improve. This has been identified as an issue by the department, which plans to ensure that the good practice in later years is present from the beginning of Year 7. The quality of reporting to parents has greatly improved and is now a strength.

76 Standards of speaking and listening are excellent, with pupils of all ages frequently deploying sophisticated and mature linguistic constructions of standard English. They are generally highly confident speakers and listening skills are also advanced, evidenced by pupils' quick responses to questions. Opportunities are insufficiently taken, however, for giving pupils a more pro-active oral role in the classroom. Reading for pleasure was a weakness in the previous report. Successful attempts to address this have led to a high level of borrowing of fiction from the school library. This also reflects the success of the English department in stimulating pupils' imaginations. At all ages, pupils write with fluency, with understanding and with considerable sensitivity. For example, pupils write perceptively about bullying in Year 7 and explain and evaluate the reasoning behind their individually-produced anti-racism posters in Year 10. Pupils' vocabulary and use of standard English grammar are considerable strengths.

77 The leadership of the department is outstanding in every respect. Not only are the organisational and administrative aspects very secure, but they are informed by a profound understanding of teaching and learning. Above all, these understandings are manifested in

classroom practice, which is of the highest order and at times remarkable.

MATHEMATICS

78 Standards of attainment are very high at both the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in comparison with national standards. At the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C is very high in comparison with the national average. The results have improved since the last inspection faster than the national rate, despite starting from a higher base. The high proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades A* to C has been sustained. The distribution of results has continued to improve. There are more grade Bs and above and there has also been improvement in the grades achieved by lower-attaining pupils. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment has also improved significantly, providing a firm basis for work in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate good problem-solving skills and are able to discuss and talk clearly about the work that they are doing. By the end of the key stage, many pupils' ability to reason about their work is impressive and contributes significantly to their developing understanding of their work. When engaged in group work using ICT software such as a dynamic geometry package, their problem solving and communication skills readily become evident. In both key stages pupils' attainment across the range of work is high. A wide range of pupils in Key Stage 4 demonstrate a high level of competence in algebra and trigonometry and set out their work logically. Pupils' problem solving is good and there is an emphasis on extended tasks and investigative coursework. This approach is developed in lessons, which focus on developing techniques and skills. A weaker aspect of pupils' work is its presentation. Although this can be good, it is often produced untidily even though the content is usually laid out logically and the standard and quality are good. On occasions, poor layout inhibits accuracy.

79 Teaching is always at least sound and over half of the observed teaching was very good or excellent. Limited observation in Key Stage 4, together with scrutiny of a large sample of pupils' work suggests that teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 4.

80 Teachers have high expectations and employ a wide range of teaching strategies including paired and group work, team teaching and the use of practical activities, which make pupils reflect and think about their understanding. The department has a wide view of the nature of mathematics that they wish pupils to share and this is reflected in the teaching. There is significant and effective use of ICT in the mathematics department, both to support the learning of mathematical concepts, to apply these concepts to other situations and to act as a form of communication. The preparation and planning for supporting pupils as they approach examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 is impressive. Pupils are provided with documentation that helps them to plan their revision, as well as a range of materials, using text and ICT, to enable them to work on their weaknesses.

81 Where teaching is satisfactory it could be improved by better subject knowledge and a closer match between pupils' learning needs and the learning activities. Feedback to pupils by the marking of work is inconsistent across the department although there are some excellent examples of supportive and developmental comments. Homework has been developed well and includes set activities for specific topics. The overview and monitoring of homework should be developed further, so that even better use is made of this time and the work is integrated even more fully into topic development.

82 Pupils have positive attitudes to learning in most mathematics lessons, often working with interest and enthusiasm. They are articulate and many enjoy discussion and

argument about how to tackle problems. This rare but positive feature at Parkside reflects the department's desire to encourage pupils to think about the concepts involved in the subject and to construct their own understanding. Pupils are supportive and helpful towards each other, an aspect which is evident in group work and also when they are working independently. In nearly all lessons there was an expectation from pupils, as well as teachers, that they would make progress in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

83 The management of the department is effective. The schemes of work improve the development of pupils' understanding, incorporating a wide range of teaching strategies to be used. There is a genuine team approach and a shared desire to improve provision for pupils. This is evident in the significant developments to improve standards since the last inspection as well as to develop the scheme of work. Pupils have benefited from involvement with the Cognitive Acceleration in Mathematics Education (CAME) curriculum initiative. The department has been involved in a comprehensive review of its work by the senior management and governors of the school. The department should continue monitoring its work especially the effectiveness of homework and develop clearer policies on some aspects of its work, for example, the use of calculators.

SCIENCE

84 At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are significantly above the national average in GCSE combined science, above the national average in biology and physics and close to national average in chemistry. These high standards have been maintained since the last inspection, with an improvement in biology and physics. Pupils make more progress between the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE than pupils do nationally in combined science, biology and physics. Analysis of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are very good across all subject areas.

85 End of Key Stage 3 assessments show that standards in science are well above the national average when compared to similar schools. In lessons, more pupils than average exceed the national standard. Pupils have a high level of understanding in key scientific ideas. For example, pupils are able to compare and contrast living processes in plants and animals and explain the speed of sound in solids, liquids and gases. Pupils develop increasing competence in practical and investigative skills, especially in processing and interpreting data. Standards are relatively higher at the end of the key stage.

86 The indicative judgement on the quality of teaching in Key Stage 4, based on limited evidence, is that it is good because pupils experience a wide range of challenging activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm which enables them to interest and motivate their pupils. Expectations are high and pupils are thoroughly prepared for external examinations through a comprehensive revision programme and many opportunities to practise and develop their scientific process skills in preparation for coursework.

87 The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory or better. The clear strengths of teaching are based on teachers' secure subject knowledge, high expectations and the variety of challenging activities they plan, that allow pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. The best teaching was seen in Year 9, where teachers' expectations rise and time is used most effectively resulting in pupils working at a faster pace and being more productive. In all years, lessons are well planned and managed. Good use is made of homework to reinforce and extend classroom activities. However, teachers do not always share the purpose of lessons with pupils in a clear and

concise way or consolidate learning by the end of lessons effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make significant progress in the subject.

88 The science curriculum is broad and balanced with opportunities to develop the full range of practical and investigative skills. Pupils are engaged with a range of varied activities that include personal research, debates, role-play and writing for a range of purposes, some of which provide an opportunity for pupils to explore the social and moral dilemmas facing scientists. The use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning is a growing strength of the department. Extra-curricular courses allow pupils to follow the three separate sciences and this provides a good opportunity to meet pupils' interests and aptitudes. Links with partner primary schools are underdeveloped.

89 Pupils show a positive attitude and approach to science lessons. There is a strong ethos for learning. Pupils enjoy the subject and respond with enthusiasm and confidence to teaching that provides challenge and activities that promote initiative and intellectual effort. Pupils are able to work independently and cooperatively and their behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils establish good relationships with each other and their teachers. Work in the mixed-gender groups is particularly successful.

90 The leadership and management of the department are very good and focused appropriately on the achievement of high standards. Organisational procedures and routine administration are clear and effective and safety policies and procedures are secure. The technicians support the department effectively. There is an increasing consistency in the way the department approaches its work. The head of department gives good support to her colleagues and informally checks planning and teaching but there is no systematic approach to monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching or standards of work. Elements of the development plan need more clarity and rigour. Teachers are committed and hard working. They know pupils' strengths and weaknesses and support them effectively. The department has a good assessment system in place but needs to develop it further to help monitor pupils' performance and to guide pupils in their learning.

91 The department has maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection and has made good progress on the issues identified. Standards have been improved with the greatest improvement in biology and physics. There is an increasing consistency in the work of the department in planning, assessment and the setting of homework. The new accommodation is used effectively to create a stimulating learning environment that is conducive to learning.

ART

92 Standards in art across the college are very good. In Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils meet the national expectations in art and a significant minority achieve well beyond this standard. In Key Stage 4, standards in art are very good with a high proportion of pupils achieving A* or A grades. However, the standard of attainment is significantly higher for girls than it is for boys. Pupils in both key stages develop strong imaginative images in their compositional work. These images are considerably enhanced when supported by a firm foundation of observational drawing. Pupils develop increasing confidence in the use of different media and the visual elements as they progress through the college. In Key Stage 4, pupils begin to establish personal styles in art and some create work of outstanding quality, which reflects a mature understanding and control of images and media. In both key stages, pupils use the work of other artists effectively to support the development of their own work. Analytical and research skills are good in Key Stage 4. However, pupils in Key Stage 3 make limited progress in the development of their research

skills because they do not use a sketch book systematically to record ideas and information or to practise key skills. In Key Stage 3, pupils' understanding about the criteria against which their work is assessed is limited. This means they are not always clear about how to evaluate their work effectively in order to make improvements.

93 The quality of teaching in art in Key Stage 3 is always satisfactory and is often good. In Key Stage 4 from limited lesson observation, extensive analysis of pupils' work and detailed discussions with Year 11 pupils, the indication is that teaching is very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. This means they are able to challenge pupils effectively in order to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in art. Good demonstrations and explanations ensure that pupils are clear about what they have to do and, as a result, they make good gains in their practical skills. Relationships in art lessons are positive, based on high expectations and on the energetic and enthusiastic approach of teachers. Pupils clearly enjoy art and have a good attitude and approach to the subject. In Key Stage 4, pupils have very mature attitudes and a real enthusiasm to continue their studies in art to a higher level. Interesting project designs mean that pupils are motivated and concentrate well during lessons. Teachers intervene well with individual pupils in order to assess their progress and to guide them about ways to improve their drawings, paintings, photography and three-dimensional work. Assessment in review sessions at the end of lessons in Key Stage 3 is not used consistently by teachers to enable them to plan future activities effectively.

94 The department has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and has made very good progress against one of the two areas for improvement. This relates to broadening the range of media used, especially three-dimensional activities. However, pupils still do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their personal research skills in Key Stage 3 and this remains an area for development.

95 The department's leadership is good and is focused appropriately on the achievement of high standards and on improving pupils' access to a broader range of art-related activities. The department does not currently have a rigorous and appropriate means of self-review in order to help it establish priority areas for development. The department's schemes of work provide a range of varied, interesting and challenging art activities in both key stages, but in Key Stage 3, the scheme does not show clearly the progression of pupils' skills and experiences in art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96 In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average. Results in the textiles and resistant materials courses were higher than in those in graphic products and food. The proportion of girls achieving GCSE grades A*-C is significantly higher than the boys. Results have improved since the last inspection. However, pupils gained lower grades in design and technology than in most of the other subjects they study in the college.

97 Pupils' work shows that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the standards expected nationally. This represents good progress, as many pupils join the college with relatively low levels of attainment in design and technology. Middle and higher-attaining pupils have making skills that are at or above nationally expected levels. For example, in a Year 9 textiles lesson, pupils had made a bag as a sports or fashion item. In this they used a range of techniques including the making of pockets, fitting zips and applying decoration, using machine embroidery and appliqué, all to a high standard. The girls' design skills are generally at a higher level than those of the boys because they

analyse their research in greater depth and evaluate their work with greater rigour. Graphical skills are satisfactory for middle and higher-attaining pupils. Subject knowledge, and the technical language which underpins it, are also at satisfactory levels for these pupils. For lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills are better developed than other aspects of the subject.

98 Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations are above the level expected nationally and pupils sustain their good progress from Key Stage 3. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the national average in all the courses offered and well above the national average in textiles. Girls continue to have higher levels of attainment than the boys, particularly in designing. Making skills are at least satisfactory on all the GCSE courses and for many pupils they are good, especially in textiles. Design skills are particularly good in graphic products and textiles, where the pupils analyse their research and refine their design ideas effectively. Middle and higher-attaining pupils have good subject knowledge and understanding. For example, in the Year 11 resistant materials course, pupils had analysed and evaluated existing solutions to lighting problems in the home including the range and type of materials used how differing materials can be joined and how the direction of light can be adjusted to inform their own designing and making. For lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills continue to be better developed than other aspects of the subject.

99 Throughout the college, pupils handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing accuracy and skill and work with due regard to safety and hygiene. Pupils make good progress in graphical communication skills, including the use of ICT and use an increasing range of drawing and projection methods to model, record and develop their design ideas. Middle and higher-attaining girls make particularly good progress with their design skills, undertaking research, analysing, drawing up specifications and evaluating with increasing depth and rigour. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, especially in making.

100 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. Teachers use effective teaching strategies and learning activities, which are appropriate for all pupils. In a Year 9 food lesson the pupils, working in groups, had designed and were to make a three-course meal for eating on an aeroplane. The teacher shared the objectives of the lesson with the pupils, set clear expectations, organised and managed practical group activity well and gave effective support to the groups. Such approaches ensure that pupils work hard and show high levels of interest in the tasks, leading to a good pace of learning and a good level of productivity. Teachers give good individual support to the pupils, often including accurate and informed feedback, which encourages them to value their efforts and increases their level of motivation. The sharing of learning objectives is not consistent. Teachers do not review progress, or set time targets for the completion of intermediate tasks and this contributes to loss of pace in some lessons. Routines are well established and classroom organisation and management are good. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are consistently high and many higher-attaining pupils work without close supervision. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Pupils' behaviour, and their relationships with teachers and with each other, are very good and they collaborate very effectively when working in groups. In Key Stage 4, based on the small number of lessons observed and the pupils' work, the indications are that the good quality of teaching is sustained and has similar strengths to those in Key Stage 3.

101 The department is well managed. ICT is well integrated into the scheme of work. However, there is no systematic review of the curriculum or formal monitoring of the quality

of teaching. The financial resources available to the department are relatively low. This is leading to a narrow range and lack of quality in the materials provided for the pupils and is having a negative impact on the standard of practical work produced, particularly in resistant materials.

102 Since the last inspection the department has made good progress. Pupils' attainments have improved steadily in Key Stage 3 and at GCSE and the quality of teaching is consistently good. The new accommodation has addressed many minor criticisms from the last inspection. However, the attainment of boys, though improved is still significantly lower than that of the girls.

GEOGRAPHY

103 The GCSE results for 1999 are significantly above the national averages and all pupils gained an A*-G grade. Geography is popular and over 40% of the pupils take GCSE which is higher than the national average. Although the girls are still attaining better than boys in GCSE, the difference is slight. The department has been working hard to achieve this. Pupils achieve higher than predictions suggest.

104 At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are attaining above the national average. Classes are taught within a broad range of mixed-ability groups and the overall standards of work seen is good. The pupils with special educational needs are also achieving well. Gifted and talented pupils are encouraged to complete extension work and to cover topics in greater depth, which contributes to the high standards in GCSE.

105 Pupils have a very positive attitudes. They show an active interest during lessons. They concentrate well, sustain effort and make substantial progress. Pupils are well behaved, work well together and take responsibility for their work. The quality of pupils' learning comes from very good teaching. All the teaching seen was very good or excellent. Lesson planning is clear and well matched to the needs of the pupils. Lessons proceed with pace and they are taught through a variety of well-planned activities. The quality of relationships at all levels is a strength of the department. Pupils enjoy geography and its associated activities.

106 Teachers are confident and experiment with differing approaches and strategies. Year 7 discussed and brainstormed in groups to develop a board game associated with migration within Italy, whilst Year 8 developed clay models of a chalk coastline. Year 9 carried out active research on Japan's sources of energy using a variety of resources, including the internet. These activities developed good independent learning skills and encouraged a love of learning. All pupils are encouraged to develop their ICT skills as a geography technique from Year 7 onwards. Much excellent work was seen in this area. Year 10 and 11 students use ICT to complete their case studies and field work elements for their GCSE examination.

107 In Key Stage 4, from the observation of the revision lessons seen and from the detailed scrutiny of work, pupils are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their work, to self evaluate much of the work they are completing and to set themselves targets in order to improve their standards. This skill and technique is proving to be a useful and successful method for pupils to gain grades beyond their predicted grades. A wide variety of teaching methods and approaches are being used within Key Stage 4 lessons.

108 The geography department is well led and the teachers work in close partnership. There is a shared commitment to raise standards and to improve the quality of education,

which can be provided by geography. The collaborative working atmosphere is a strength of the department. Resources are adequate and well managed. Extensive use is made of ICT to enhance the teaching of geography. The rooms create a good ethos and make a positive contribution to the quality of education which the department provides.

109 The department has continued to make improvement since the last inspection and the departmental development plan which is linked with the college development plan, shows clearly where further progress is planned. This is a very good department.

HISTORY

110 Standards are good in history. Effective teaching and an exciting curriculum have helped to secure significant progress since the last inspection. Attainment is good. The percentage of pupils achieving higher grades at GCSE has risen from being in line with national averages at the time of the previous inspection to 15% above the national average in 1999. This is a significant improvement and has been matched by an improvement in the overall pass rate, which is now in line with national averages. This improvement has been secured by a determination that coursework requirements are fulfilled. This pattern of high attainment is repeated in the Key Stage 3 assessments. In the review of written work throughout the college in both key stages it is clear that there are exceptional strengths in researching as independent deductive historians and in representing findings through the use of ICT. In Years 7 and 8, the quality of written work is in line with national expectations but in Year 9 it is above. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good use of technical language and are able to practise empathy in both sensitive contexts and also in extended role-play exercises.

111 Pupils' attitudes are good because they are responding positively to an encouraging and supportive learning environment. They accept the challenges offered, build on previous learning and make wider connections with relevant contemporary material. This consistently consolidates their attainment. Behaviour is always good and attitudes towards sensitive moral and cultural issues are always very positive.

112 Teaching is generally good. It has improved since the last inspection so that all history lessons now exhibit pace and challenge and are characterised by sound teacher knowledge, clear objectives, careful planning and good relationships. A considerable range of teaching and learning techniques are used, with the judicious use of video clips being especially appropriate for a Media Arts College. The promotion of empathy continues to be a strength. This is achieved by reflective activities where pupils are challenged to understand the feelings of slaves in the 'Middle Passage' or post-World-War-Two refugees. It is also facilitated by elaborate role-play exercises, where the whole class becomes the manorial court dealing with the petitioners from a medieval village, with the teachers in role as well as the pupils. Teachers have a detailed awareness of the individual needs of all pupils and this adds to the quality of the learning because issues of access and extension are part of their planning. By contrast ICT is under used. Subject-specific target setting, as part of the continuing assessment and reporting strategy, so that pupils can know how they can achieve further progress, is under developed.

113 Leadership is effective and has ensured consistency in classroom practice and that access to the curriculum and extension opportunities enable all pupils to succeed in history. The curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences regular use of ICT. Documentation is sound but is insufficiently specific about skills, concepts and key technical language associated with each unit of work.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

114 Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in ICT have continued to improve and are above the national average. This applies both to the few pupils who study the full subject and the remaining pupils who all study the short course. In Key Stage 3, all pupils study an ICT module in each year. The college has deliberately set out to build pupils' confidence in the use of ICT by engaging them in a series of projects. These projects develop their skills, particularly in text and image manipulation and give them the opportunity to create presentations, which may also include movement and sound. Pupils' attainment in this work is impressive and by the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment in the practical use of ICT is very high and well above the national expectation. It is pleasing to see pupils of all abilities making effective use of the technology. This developing confidence and knowledge supports, and is supported by, the use of ICT across the curriculum. A number of departments make very effective use of ICT within their subject area, including mathematics, design and technology, geography, religious education, as well as the very effective multimedia work. The college is very effective in developing confidence and skills through Key Stage 3. These provide a secure base for work in Key Stage 4.

115 Teaching in Key Stage 3 is never less than satisfactory and overall is good with some very good teaching seen. Many non-specialist teachers are confident and competent users of ICT, which they use well to support their teaching. This reinforces the pupils' development of ICT skills across the curriculum. Most teaching within the formal ICT curriculum is characterised by very good subject knowledge and technical competence with the software being used. Teachers also impart confidence and familiarity with the technology, which encourages confidence in the less adventurous pupils. The use of ICT in teaching impacts positively in many areas of the curriculum and significant evidence of pupils' individual use can be found in most subject areas. Use of animation in mathematics and handling data in geography are particularly impressive. Effective use of ICT is also made by the special needs department. All pupils have the opportunity to use the technology to support revision for examinations. The use of ICT in music is relatively less well developed than it is in other areas of the arts and media curriculum. There is little time allocated to the theory and social aspects of the subject. These are, nevertheless, covered in an efficient manner. In Key Stage 3, all required aspects of National Curriculum IT are included in planning. Although there is an emphasis on text, image and graphic work, control elements are included, some of which are taught through work in other subject areas, like design and technology. The computer rooms are relatively small for the number of computers and pupils that use them, particularly when there is a need for non-computer based work. The layout of the IT classrooms hinders the teachers working interactively with the whole class.

116 Pupils are keen and motivated learners in ICT, even when older machines will not work as fast as they would like. Pupils work in a supportive manner. Boys and girls are equally positive in their use of the hardware. Most pupils show initiative and are prepared to explore and find out for themselves. They are supported by effective documentation including guidance sheets, which are well produced and support individual pieces of software. These are also progressive in the level of support they give and take account of pupils' knowledge. Behaviour in ICT is good.

117 Management of ICT is effective and well organised. Standards have been raised by a coherent approach and clear philosophy. The management of ICT is well supported by unobtrusive and efficient technical support, which is valued both by staff and pupils. There

has been considerable development and improvement in the effective use of ICT since the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

118 GCSE results in French in 1999 were well above the national average and in German they were broadly in line with the national average. These results reflect the levels of attainment reported at the time of the last inspection. Girls attained significantly better than boys in French but in German there is no gender difference in attainment.

119 In Key Stage 3, most pupils attain standards which are in line with national expectations and some achieve above national expectations, as was the case at the last inspection. Listening skills are generally well developed because the pupils have plenty of opportunities to hear the spoken language in lessons. Pupils can repeat words and phrases from memory and higher attainers can take part confidently in short conversations with good pronunciation. Some pupils, however, lack confidence in speaking and there is little evidence of pupils taking the initiative and using the foreign language for their own purposes. Pupils are able to extract information from the limited range of texts they use, but there is insufficient independent reading. Most pupils can copy words and sentences accurately and by the end of the key stage many pupils are able to produce accurate pieces of descriptive writing using linked sentences. Some written work, however, including that of some higher attainers, is untidy and poorly presented.

120 The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. Teachers are secure in the knowledge and understanding of the language they teach. This has an impact on the effective acquisition of knowledge. Teachers make confident and consistent use of the foreign language in the management of their lessons and this enables pupils to make good progress in developing listening and speaking skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and set challenging tasks, although in some instances they are insufficiently rigorous in insisting on good quality presentation of written work and keeping all pupils focused on learning throughout the lesson. Lessons are planned effectively but in some lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to communicate in the foreign language from memory. Lessons have clear objectives and explanations so that pupils know what they have to do and can get on task quickly. Teachers manage time and resources well so that all pupils can make progress in learning but in some sessions pupils spend too much time in conversations unrelated to the subject. Good provision and effective use of classroom support enable pupils with special educational needs to make sound progress. Homework is set and marked regularly to reinforce and extend knowledge and skills. Teachers make good use of assessment procedures to guide curriculum planning but there is little evidence of pupils being involved in assessing their own attainment and progress.

121 The department has maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and has made good progress in implementing improvements since the last inspection. Teachers now have higher expectations of pupils and they have benefited from support on teaching techniques provided by the college. Lessons have clear objectives, and pupils are set more challenging tasks. Teachers now make more use of assessment to plan progression and there are now more opportunities for oral communication in lessons. There is, however, scope for further improvement in the development of reading and writing skills.

122 The department is efficiently managed and has a positive ethos of achieving high standards. Teachers work together well, share responsibility and collaborate on learning

and teaching strategies. The development plan, which has been introduced since the appointment of the new principal identifies appropriate priorities for development.

MUSIC

123 Standards in music at the end of Key Stage 3 in most lessons are in line with national expectations. In lessons where standards are good or better, pupils are able to work independently and with confidence, focusing on the task in hand and producing musical outcomes appropriate to the teacher's expectations. Where standards are less good, pupils take time to settle to the required task and lack sufficient basic musical skills to enable good progress to take place. This tends to occur in Year 9 rather than Year 7 or 8. Standards in Key Stage 4 are generally good, with significantly higher standards in Year 11. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages, and their performance is equal to that of other pupils. The teacher has high expectations of behaviour but sometimes educational and musical objectives are less clear, especially in Year 9. There are no clear gender differences in attainment in either key stage.

124 Whilst the overall the quality of teaching in music is good, there are aspects which are less secure. For example, the teaching of basic musical skills, the planning of individual lessons in Key Stage 3 and the quality and use of assessment to inform future lessons. Teaching is at its best when pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, pupils' work is monitored during a lesson and resources including accommodation are used effectively. Pupils acquire musical skills and knowledge more slowly in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4, but pupils in both key stages show interest, enthusiasm and involvement in their work, which is generally, and rightly, of a practical nature. Pupils have access to a variety of percussion instruments, although there are few examples from non-western countries.

125 Pupils' attitudes are positive and they show respect towards adults and to each other, supporting others well when working in groups. Pupils' behaviour is good. This is particularly positive given the nature of the practical work and the fact that groups work without direct supervision in practice rooms. Little use is made of homework in music, which is not on the college's homework timetable in Key Stage 3. This is a difficult subject for which to set homework outside the classroom but pupils should be encouraged to listen to music in their own time. The department provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and regular opportunities for performance. There are a number of music groups, which pupils organise themselves, many of which achieve high standards. A particular strength is the way in which public performance celebrates the best of pupils' work both inside and outside the curriculum, providing a clear message of open access to musical and performance opportunities for all pupils.

126 The standards identified in the previous inspection report have been sustained. Significant improvements have taken place in respect of the Year 9 curriculum. The quantity, quality and range of percussion instruments, and the accommodation available to the department has improved but there is a shortage of storage space. Little singing takes place during lessons, nor is there much evidence of singing within the scheme of work. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have little opportunity to develop their ICT skills through the subject, nor to use these skills in a creative way, which should be addressed.

127 Management of the department is satisfactory and provides a good philosophical base for pupils' learning, which reflect the college's values. Monitoring and evaluating of the subject on a systematic basis should lead to appropriate medium-term development planning and a clear focus on departmental needs. Individual pupil assessment is

undeveloped, especially in Key Stage 3 and the opportunity for pupil progress to influence teaching strategies is, therefore, missed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128 Standards in physical education in Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. Pupils have appropriate time in lessons for consolidating their learning of basic techniques, for example in the practices leading to the game of rounders. This means that pupils are, in most cases, able to catch, throw and hit. A few pupils, because they have better developed techniques, are performing at an above average level. Some pupils are not secure about how to work effectively in order to make progress because they do not have enough opportunities to observe and analyse against performance criteria. This limits their understanding.

129 The quality of teaching in physical education is satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. Clear demonstrations and explanations ensure that pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of their work. Teachers intervene sensitively with individual pupils in order to assess their progress and guide them about ways to improve their bowling action, throwing and batting. Teachers are not always clear about the intended performance outcomes for pupils either of a single lesson or of a unit of work and do not have sufficiently secure systems to evaluate pupils' progress in order to raise standards. The good management of the teaching space and resources enables pupils to settle to their work quickly. Positive relationships within physical education lessons are based on a caring ethos that is demonstrated by teachers valuing of individuals and their use of praise.

130 In physical education pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of different cultures. Their moral and social development is achieved as part of their learning in lessons and through a varied extra-curricular programme. This has a philosophy of open access, with the opportunity to experience competition at a range of levels in inter-form and inter-school matches.

131 The department has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and has made progress against the key issues. These relate to the development of varied teaching and learning styles, effective monitoring and higher expectation of pupils through more challenge and improved leadership.

132 The leadership and management of the department is now good. The head of department has a clear vision for departmental development so that teachers can better monitor pupils' performance and develop strategies to raise achievement. Good teamwork means there is a consistency of expectations in terms of behaviour, physical education kit and pupils' concentration on the task. The department's development plan has clear outcomes with priorities against which to set actions.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133 Standards in religious education are high. This is being achieved by very good teaching and an accessible curriculum, thereby building on the standard reported at the last inspection.

134 Since the previous inspection, the college has ceased to offer optional GCSE religious studies. Specialist religious education teaching is now directed to all Key Stage 4 pupils through an 'Ethics and Religion' course, conducted largely at an oral level. Video

evidence, recordings of evaluative feedbacks at the end of units on such issues as abortion and euthanasia and also documentaries prepared by pupils on such issues as eugenics and vegetarianism, reveal that the responses of the pupils are lucid and very well-informed. It is clear that they have been reflecting on the main moral and ethical issues of the day, within a religious context. This complies very well with the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is a very popular course and it is used to assess pupils on key skills in communication and visual literacy. However, writing is insufficiently developed within the course.

135 Attainment and progress in Key Stage 3 are good because pupils are enthused by the curriculum and they demonstrate that they can put to use what they have learnt in a wider context. They have a good understanding of religious festivals, symbols and the appropriate technical language. Pupils' oral skills are much in advance of their written skills, although written work is good. In Year 9, pupils produce highly sensitive and well-researched projects on the various world religions, mostly prepared using ICT techniques and thereby confirming a strength identified at the previous inspection. Behaviour is always good.

136 The quality of teaching is consistently good and frequently very good. It is characterised by careful planning, clear learning objectives, an insistence on pace, continuous evaluation and varied teaching methods, including adventurous forms of learning which involve experiential activities. These include the use of Buddhist 'stilling' exercises and group work involving a variety of media and story telling, where high concentration levels are expected and required. Visits to places of worship are a regular feature of the programme and these include various Christian denominations as well as the other major world religions. ICT is incorporated well and pupils use the internet for research purposes. Teachers prepare ICT activities well and it is a very positive educational experience. In Key Stage 4, the specialist facilities associated with the college's media arts status are used fully to promote the subject. Teachers have high levels of awareness of individual needs and this means that differentiation is practised very systematically.