

INSPECTION REPORT

Ibstock Community College
Ibstock

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique Reference Number: 120242

Inspection Number: 184087

Headteacher: Mr. N. Melvin

Reporting inspector: Mr. A. Nicholl
2473

Dates of inspection: 6th – 10th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708519

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| Type of control: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 to 14 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| College address: | Central Avenue Ibstock Leicestershire LE67 6NE |
| Telephone number: | 01530 260705 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr. J. Wilebur |
| Date of previous inspection: | December 1994 |

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| | | Teaching |
| | | Leadership and management |
| Mrs. V. Bradley, Lay Inspector | Equality of opportunity | Attendance |
| | | Support, guidance and pupils' welfare |
| | | Partnership with parents and the community |
| | | Community links |
| Mr. A. Allfree | Art | |
| | Design and technology | |
| Mrs. A. Braithwaite | Geography | The efficiency of the college |
| | Physical education | |
| Mrs. E. Charlesworth | Music | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development |
| | | Assessment |
| Dr. P. Murray | Science | Staffing, accommodation and learning resources |
| Mrs. M. Nathan | History | Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |
| | Religious education | |
| Mrs. D. Nicholl | English | |
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| Mr. W. Wimshurst | Mathematics | Curriculum |

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the college does well

- The college is very well led and managed.
- A high proportion of the teaching is good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching.
- There are very good processes for pupils' support, guidance and welfare including very good careers education.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and they behave well.
- Relationships in the college are very good and pupils' personal development is very good.
- The college manages its budget and the funding it is given very efficiently.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The college has very good capacity for further improvement and the processes for planning for development are excellent.

• Where the college has weaknesses

- I. Provision for information technology is unsatisfactory and, as a result, pupils' attainment is unsatisfactory.
- II. Insufficient time is provided for art and therefore pupils' attainment is unsatisfactory.

The college has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection will be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils in the college.

• How the college has improved since the last inspection

The college has developed well since the last inspection. The key issues for action that were identified in the last inspection report have largely been addressed. For example, the college has made the required improvements to mathematics and religious education. However, the concerns expressed about art in the last inspection report have not been fully dealt with. The results in the National Curriculum tests have not improved, although they have stayed broadly in line with pupils' attainment on entry to the college. A new principal has been appointed who has introduced clear and effective strategies for the improvement of attainment. These include a college-wide literacy programme, new processes for setting pupils short-term targets for their improvement and a new process for the careful monitoring of pupils' progress. These innovations are beginning to have an effect and inspectors report that there are signs of attainment rising in Years 7 and 8. The college has sensible targets for improvement and its planning for future development demonstrates that it is very well placed to achieve them.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 year olds in national tests in 1999:

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Performance in: | Compared with all schools | Compared with similar schools | Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E |
| Key Stage 3 tests | D | E | |

Results in the Key Stage 3 tests are better in science than in English and mathematics. In science, the results are average when compared to all schools although well below average when compared to similar schools, that is, those that have a similar proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. In English and mathematics, they are below average when compared to all schools and well below average when compared to similar schools. Ibstock has a higher than average number of pupils on the special educational needs register and with a statement of special educational needs. This has the effect of lowering the overall results in national tests.

Attainment for pupils who are now in Key Stage 3 was judged during the inspection to be average. This is in contrast with the performance of those pupils who took Key Stage 3 tests in 1999, whose results were below average.

• **Quality of teaching**

| | Overall quality | Most effective in: | Least effective in: |
|-------------|------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Years 7-9 | Good | English, science, design and technology, geography and history. | |
| English | Good | | |
| Mathematics | Good | | |

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 100 per cent of lessons; in 74 per cent of lessons it was good and in 17 per cent it was very good.

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

Other aspects of the college

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| Behaviour | Good in lessons and around the college; pupils are courteous and friendly. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory: in line with the average for secondary schools nationally. |
| Ethos* | Very good: teachers have high expectations of their pupils both in terms of behaviour and attainment. |
| Leadership and management | Very good: the governors and senior managers work effectively in partnership. The principal provides a very clear sense of purpose and educational direction for the work of the college. |
| Curriculum | Satisfactory overall, the curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a very good careers education programme and good opportunities for extra-curricular activities but there are weaknesses in the provision for information technology and art. |
| Pupils with special educational needs | Very good: pupils have very high quality individual education plans and are very well supported. They make good progress as they move through the college. |
| Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development | Good overall: spiritual development is satisfactory, moral and cultural development are good and social development is very good. |
| Staffing, resources and accommodation | Satisfactory overall: sufficient well-qualified teachers; adequate accommodation, although that for science is of poor quality; some shortages of resources in a some subjects. |
| Value for money | Good: the college provides a good quality of education and pupils make good progress. |

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

• The parents' views of the college

| What most parents like about the college | What some parents are not happy about |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| III. It is approachable when there are problems. IV. It enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work. V. It keeps parents well informed about their children's progress. VI. It encourages positive attitudes and values. VII. It encourages good behaviour. VIII. Their children like coming to college. | IX. There were no concerns that were |

Inspectors' judgements support parents' views. The college is approachable, it does enable pupils to achieve a good standard of work, it keeps parents well informed about their children's progress, it does encourage positive attitudes and values, pupils behave well and they enjoy coming to college. At the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection, some parents raised concerns about the homework timetable and the fact that this did not seem to be followed by teachers. This was the case during the inspection and it has been brought to the attention of the principal who has undertaken to review the monitoring of the setting of homework. One parent expressed concerns regarding the practice of teaching in mixed attainment classes in Year 7. Inspectors found that teachers matched classroom activities to pupils' levels of attainment very well and pupils in these classes were making good progress. Some parents expressed concerns about the quantity of information they received about the college's activities. Inspectors found this to be satisfactory and broadly similar to that seen in other schools. Nevertheless, the principal has undertaken to review the processes for sharing information and to send newsletters to parents with greater frequency.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of learning, the governors and senior managers should take the following actions.

- ◆. Improve standards in information technology by:
 - . ensuring that there is an appropriate planned programme across the whole curriculum that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, (see paragraphs: 42, 86, 151, 152),
 - . ensuring that subject teachers are appropriately trained to teach aspects of National Curriculum information technology in their subject, (see paragraph: 153),
 - . ensuring that there are appropriate mechanisms for the regular and frequent assessment of pupils' progress in developing their skills, (see paragraph: 152)).

- ◆. Improve standards in art by:
 - . increasing the amount of teaching time for the subject, (see paragraphs: 42, 122),
 - . ensuring that all of the aspects of the National Curriculum, in particular opportunities for three-dimensional work, are included in the programme that pupils study, (see paragraphs: 86, 124).

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- . Ensuring that there is a daily act of collective worship.
 - . Improving the quality of the accommodation in science.
 - . Improving the accommodation for mathematics and humanities.
 - . Improving the quality of the sports hall floor.
 - . Including all of the required information in the governors' report to parents.
- These are indicated in paragraphs: 55, 72, 86, 92, 121, 172.

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the college**

1.The college is an 11-14 High School within the Leicestershire Plan. It is situated in Ibstock, one of the southern parishes of north-west Leicestershire. Ibstock has seen considerable economic change in recent years with the decline of the mining industry. There has been some regeneration of late and much new building is evident in the locality.

2.The college has community status and is funded to provide educational opportunities for the whole community. These include education and childcare for the under 5's, youth work, adult education, community development and sports and leisure facilities.

3.The college began to use a wider range of tests to determine pupils' attainment on entry in 1999. The results for the present Year 7 indicate that attainment on entry is slightly above average. There are records of reading ages for all of the intakes of pupils from 1992 through to 1998. These show that overall pupils begin at Ibstock with reading ages that are below their actual age. The difference varies from between four months to one year. For the group that began in 1998, the present Year 8, the difference is around one year.

- There are 560 pupils on roll - 280 boys, 280 girls, (smaller than the average size of secondary school). The college has increased in size by 13% since the last inspection.
- Fifty-nine pupils are eligible for free school meals, (11% - around the national average).
- There are 122 pupils on the college's register for special educational needs, (22% - above the national average).
- Twenty-four pupils have a statement for special educational needs, (4.3% - above the national average).
- Five pupils are listed as belonging to other ethnic groups, (low).

1.The college has a broad set of aims that include providing quality educational, social, cultural, recreational and leisure opportunities for the community.

2.It has set itself the following targets for improvement during 1999:

- Raising pupils' attainment.
- Reviewing the curriculum.
- Reviewing the college aims.

1.It has set itself the following appropriate targets for attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3:

- In English, 68% of pupils will attain level 5 or above.
- In mathematics, 65% of pupils will attain level 5 or above.
- In science, 65% of pupils will attain level 5 or above.

1.Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1999 | 84 | 94 | 178 |

| National Curriculum Test Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 43 | 52 | 52 |
| | Girls | 66 | 51 | 50 |
| | Total | 109 | 103 | 102 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | College | 61 (65) | 58 (56) | 57 (60) |
| | National | 64 (65) | 63 (60) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | College | 18 (31) | 31 (33) | 19 (29) |
| | National | 23 (31) | 35 (37) | 20 (31) |

| Teacher Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 29 | 45 | 43 |
| | Girls | 60 | 47 | 46 |
| | Total | 89 | 92 | 89 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | College | 50 (57) | 52 (57) | 50 (57) |
| | National | 63 (62) | 62 (64) | 55 (62) |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | College | 16 (13) | 23 (34) | 15 (24) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 35 (37) | 28 (31) |

¹

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

| | | % |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Authorised Absence | College | 8.6 |
| | National comparative data | 7.9 |
| Unauthorised Absence | College | 0.4 |
| | National comparative data | 1.1 |

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

| | Number |
|--------------|--------|
| Fixed period | 10 |
| Permanent | 1 |

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

| | % |
|------------------------|-----|
| Very good or better | 17 |
| Satisfactory or better | 100 |
| Less than satisfactory | 0 |

7. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

7. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE COLLEGE

7. Attainment and progress

2. In the last inspection report attainment was judged to be around national averages and this is still the case. Evidence from classroom observations and from looking at pupils' work indicates that overall attainment is in line with the nationally expected level at Key Stage 3 (age 14). This represents an improvement over that for pupils who left the college at the end of the summer term in 1999. The results of the national tests that they had taken were below the national averages in English and mathematics although in line with them for science. When compared with similar schools, as defined by the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, attainment in the national tests for 1999 was well below average at Key Stage 3. The college's test results over the three years 1996 – 98 have varied but when considered as a whole they have been below the national average. While results have remained below average they have shown an upward trend broadly in line with the rising trend nationally.

3. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected level 5 in English was close to the average, but the proportion attaining the higher level 6 was well below average. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 was below the national average and that for level 6 close to the average. In science, the proportions of pupils attaining levels 5 and 6 were close to the average. When these results are compared to those for similar schools, the results for English, mathematics and science are all well below average.

4. The college keeps careful records of pupils' reading ages as they begin in Year 7. These indicate that the overall attainment of pupils as they join the college has varied from year to year but has consistently been below average. The average reading age for the current Year 8 was one year below their actual age while that for the current Year 9 was five months below this level when they began their college career. The college has recently introduced a new system for testing pupils on entry. A battery of tests is used to indicate pupils' attainment in a range of basic skills. These tests, along with the information about pupils' reading ages, show that this year, for the first time since 1992, the average level of attainment of pupils as they join the college is above average.

5. In English, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. Pupils can listen effectively to their teacher and to each other. The majority are fluent speakers and are able to answer questions readily. By the end of the key stage pupils can listen to other points of view and present their own effectively. They can work well in groups to discuss issues and to argue points. Reading has improved since the last inspection. Although many pupils have difficulties with reading at the start, by the end of the key stage they read accurately and with understanding. Almost all pupils can write in an organised, legible and well presented way, while the higher attainers can produce excellent examples of extended and complex writing that are beautifully presented through the use of information technology.

6. The college's very good literacy programme helps pupils to improve their speaking, reading and writing skills. A well-planned reading programme helps them to make gains in their reading ages and the progress they make is monitored well by their tutors. In their subjects they are given opportunities for reading aloud and they develop expression and their confidence in the use of a range of specialist vocabulary. Key words that are important for pupils to use in their writing are displayed prominently in the classrooms used for teaching a subject. Pupils learn to apply their language skills and use them well in conducting investigations and research. They develop an understanding of how to communicate their ideas

more effectively through the use of writing frames, which help them to impose a structure on their writing.

7. In mathematics, attainment has improved since the time of the last inspection. In lessons and in pupils' work attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage pupils are able to use number in a satisfactory way and have satisfactory skills in mental arithmetic. They can construct and interpret graphs. They can use simple algebra and algebraic terms and most pupils can solve equations. Pupils have a sound understanding of shape and can calculate the area and perimeters of plane shapes and the volumes of solids. They have sound data-handling skills and can use them to produce graphs and to calculate averages.

8. Pupils' proficiency with number across the whole curriculum has improved since the last inspection and this is now satisfactory. Most pupils cope satisfactorily with number and the basic computational skills required for the subjects they study. Pupils demonstrate in many subjects that they can make sense of information presented in graphs, and they can usually construct their own using data they have collected. In design and technology, their measurement skills are satisfactory and they show an understanding of gear ratios. In geography, pupils can measure distances on maps and use and interpret graphs appropriately. In science, they can use measuring equipment in a satisfactory way, record data and produce appropriate graphs to demonstrate their findings.

9. In science, attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage pupils have a good understanding of basic scientific principles and of the scientific language used in a range of topics such as energy, elements, mixtures and compounds, how the human body works, sight and sound, and electricity and magnetism. They have good practical skills and can apply these to investigations and experiments in the laboratory.

10. Attainment in religious education was said to be a weakness at the time of the last inspection. This is now much better and in line with the expectations set by the locally agreed syllabus. These improvements are due to the teachers' improved subject knowledge. They work well as a team and have made significant improvements to the curriculum.

11. In design and technology, modern languages and music, attainment has also improved since the last inspection. Attainment in all three subjects is now above average. In design and technology, the teaching scheme enables pupils to acquire a specific range of making skills as well as the more broadly based designing skills, and the teaching is consistently good. In modern languages, the improvement in attainment is due to very high quality teaching schemes and policies, and much good teaching. In music, there is a well-structured teaching scheme, and also good teaching.

12. In art, attainment is below the expected level. This is entirely due to a shortage of teaching time: pupils have less time to study art than is usual at this key stage. They reach the required standard in the work that they do, for example in their use of line, tone, shape and form in drawing and painting. However, the shortage of time prevents the teaching of important components of the National Curriculum such as three-dimensional work. Thus, overall attainment in art is below the expected level.

13. Attainment is also below the expected level in information technology. This is, again, because aspects of the National Curriculum are not taught, although the reasons for this are slightly more complex. The college teaches basic computer skills through a core programme for all pupils. These basic skills are intended to be used and further developed by subject teachers. This is not happening at present, partially due to difficulties that the college has experienced with its computer network. More importantly, though, there is no planning across the curriculum to ensure that pupils' computer skills are systematically developed as they move through the college. Pupils have well developed word-processing skills but their skills in

other aspects of work with computers are weak.

14. Attainment in geography, history and physical education is average. In geography, pupils learn to use atlases and maps with confidence and begin to understand the different features of developed and developing countries. In history, they acquire a sound knowledge of important facts and can examine sources of evidence to determine the causes of events. In physical education, they learn to swim well and learn the skills and rules so that they can play a number of games.

15. Nationally girls attain better than boys do. At Ibstock this situation is more marked and in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 girls do better than boys by more than is the case nationally. The college is aware of these differences and has begun to take steps to improve the situation. These include more careful target-setting and the modification of the content of the curriculum in some subjects.

16. Pupils' progress across the college is good. They join the college with overall attainment that is below average and leave with overall attainment that is average. The college has taken some important steps to raise attainment in recent years. These include a carefully planned scheme to develop pupils' reading, a college-wide approach to pupils' literacy, setting pupils shorter-term and more specific targets for improvement and developing the role of tutors to ensure that pupils' progress is more carefully monitored. There are signs that these changes are having a positive effect. The last inspection reported that attainment in Year 8 was below that in Years 7 and 9. Inspectors in a number of subjects for example, English and mathematics report that attainment in Years 7 and 8 is improving.

17. Pupils make good progress in English. A new teaching scheme has been introduced. All of the teaching in English is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum and make sure pupils progress through it appropriately.

18. In science, pupils' progress is good. Pupils are consolidating and developing their knowledge and practical skills systematically as they move through the college.

19. Progress is also good in design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. Some of the reasons for this have been alluded to in the section on attainment above. All of these subjects have good teaching schemes, much good teaching and the teachers have high expectation of their pupils.

20. In mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress. There have been many changes in the mathematics department since the last inspection. There is a new head of department and a new teaching scheme. Many of the teachers have joined the department over the last two years. There has been a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching but this has not yet had time to make a full impact on pupils' attainment in the national tests. Pupils also make satisfactory progress in physical education.

21. In art, and in information technology, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. In art, this is due to a shortage of teaching time which means that pupils do not develop important areas of work. In information technology, weaknesses in whole-curriculum planning and a lack of confidence in using computers by some teachers mean that pupils do not have opportunities to develop systematically their skills in information technology.

22. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. All make good gains in their literacy, particularly in reading. This enables them to make progress that is at least in line with that of their peers in all of their subjects. Each pupil has a very good individual education plan. These have been written to help to teachers plan their lessons effectively to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress. The plans contain very clear general medium-term targets for improvement. Teachers have further interpreted these targets very effectively so that each

pupil has clear short-term learning targets for every subject. The help provided for pupils by support teachers and learning assistants is good and this helps to ensure that progress is good. They invariably have a good knowledge of the pupils they are responsible for and the targets for improvement that they have been set in their individual education plans. When support teachers and assistants are present in lessons, the quality of their joint planning with the subject teacher is very good. Generally across the college, individual education plans are used very effectively by teachers to ensure that work is planned to match pupils' levels of attainment and to help them reach the targets they have been set.

28. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

23. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and often display a keen interest in lessons. They answer questions readily and are happy to make presentations to the rest of the class and to read aloud. They concentrate well, and in some subjects, for example in mathematics, design and technology and geography, they continue work begun in lessons at home. In a number of subjects they can work independently without guidance, for example in carrying out experiments in science. Good numbers of pupils attend clubs related to subjects such as physical education and music.

24. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, behaviour is almost always good in lessons and often it is very good. Pupils listen to and follow instructions and show a good regard for safety in practical lessons. Around the building between lessons, in the playground at breaks and lunchtime and in the dining area, behaviour is generally good. Most pupils are courteous and polite. On occasions, however, a few pupils are boisterous when moving around the college. A small number of pupils are excluded from the college for either fixed periods or permanently. No incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection, and, in talking to inspectors, pupils said such incidents are rare. When these do occur parents say they are dealt with swiftly and sensitively.

25. Relationships between pupils and those they have with their teachers are very good. Teachers show respect for pupils and they, in turn, show respect for the teacher and each other. They listen carefully to the teacher and other pupils. They support each other well, offering help to others who are having difficulties with their work. They demonstrate they value the efforts of others through, for example, listening to each others' compositions in music and applauding good results. Pupils are not afraid to offer opinions, knowing that others will respect their feelings. They work together well in lessons, and in games they apply the rules and accept decisions. They take good care of resources and equipment.

26. Pupils personal development is very good. They can work independently very effectively and work very well when not closely supervised by the teacher. They have a very good sense of pride in their work and present it very well. There are some examples of excellently presented work in pupils' writing in their project concerned with Robert Stephenson. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. They are keen to take the opportunities offered to them within the college by acting as receptionists, librarians and dinner monitors and through serving on the college and year councils. Pupils help and support each other in a number of ways. This can be seen in the paired reading scheme where Year 9 pupils help lower-attaining Year 7 pupils by reading with them regularly. It can also be seen when pupils in Year 7 work with a partner to help each other to set targets for improvement, and to monitor their success in achieving these. They can take the initiative when they see a need. For example, pupils in Year 7 started a college magazine. Pupils in Year 9 suggested that they might support pupils lower down the college by providing a mentoring service. They are also thoughtful about the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and make great efforts to raise money for charity through joining in local and national initiatives such as Children in Need.

32. Attendance

27. Overall attendance figures are satisfactory. They are broadly in line with the national average. The figure for authorised absence is in line with the average while that for unauthorised absence is below it. Attendance figures are slightly lower than at the time of the last inspection, but have improved during the first half of this term. The attendance record of most pupils is very good, but there is a small number of pupils whose attendance record is poor. Not all parents recognise the need for pupils to attend college regularly.

28. Pupils are usually punctual in arriving at college. Those who do arrive late are monitored to help create habits of punctuality. Buses bringing pupils to the college arrive early and there is a prompt and effective start to the day. Pupils are generally punctual to lessons, and lessons start on time.

34. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

34. Teaching

29. Teaching is good and is a strength of the college. All lessons are at least satisfactory, in three-quarters of them teaching is good or better and in over three lessons in every twenty it is very good or excellent.

30. A number of features contribute to the better teaching. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. There is good long-term planning through effective teaching schemes in all subjects. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attainment and behaviour. Their classroom control is very good, they manage their pupils very well and use encouragement and humour effectively to motivate them. Organisation is good and the methods used are appropriate to the knowledge and skills that are being taught. Time and resources are used well and there is often a crisp pace through lessons. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is used effectively by teachers to ensure activities are matched to levels of attainment. Pupils' work is marked well and teachers often use this opportunity to set them targets for improvement.

31. Homework is often used well to support and extend pupils' understanding of work begun in class. In the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection parents expressed concerns that the homework timetable was not being used effectively. During the inspection week homework was set with reasonable consistency and was, in the main, of a good quality, but it was clear that the timetable was not being adhered to. This concern has been shared with the principal who has undertaken to monitor this situation more closely.

32. In all subjects there are many examples of better teaching and some of these are set out below:

- ◆ In English, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher had adapted the techniques used in the national literacy strategy for primary schools to develop pupils' skills in reading and writing. He chose a part of Linford Christie's autobiography as a basis for the lesson and pupils found this very interesting. The lesson was meticulously planned and the teacher had ensured that a learning support teacher could be present to provide additional help for pupils with special educational needs. A range of tasks of different levels of difficulty was used. These were well matched to pupils' levels of attainment and, as a result, their skills in identifying important features of a text and in understanding autobiographical writing were very well developed.
- ◆ In mathematics, in a Year 7 lesson on numeracy, the teacher used a range of activities to develop pupils' skills. They were given sets of cards with the numbers 0 to 9 and when the teacher called out a multiplication question the pupils had to hold up their cards to answer. This was extended to include problems on shopping. Pupils were expected to calculate

mentally the price of a number of goods and hold up their cards to show how much they would have left from a given sum of money if they bought the goods. Finally they practised their tables by chanting them. They were asked to do this in a variety of ways, for example by starting at different points in the particular table or by only chanting multiples of 3, 4 and 6. Good support was given to the lower attaining pupils. They were seated close to the teacher who was able to ensure that they were effectively involved in the activity.

- ◆. In science, in a Year 8 lesson on the digestive system, the teacher used one of the pupils as a model (with much good natured hilarity from others) to identify the location of the different organs used in digesting food and their respective roles in the process. He then proceeded to discuss what constitutes a balanced diet, including the special needs of vegetarians, explaining the importance of ensuring that such a diet compensates for missing protein and iron that would otherwise have been acquired from red meat.
- ◆. In history, in a Year 7 lesson, the teachers wanted to develop pupils' skills in evaluating sources of evidence. They had brought the whole year group together to introduce the pupils to this new topic. The lesson had been planned very carefully and three different sources of evidence had been prepared. These included enlarged pictures and eye-witness accounts. A short film extract was used effectively to set the scene for the work pupils had to do. Each of the teachers involved played a different role in the lesson. Pupils made very good progress and by the end of the lesson many were acting as young historians.
- ◆. In modern foreign languages, in a Year 9 lesson with a group of lower attaining pupils, the teacher had identified three targets for the lesson. He shared these with the pupils at the start of the lesson. The tasks and the topic for the lesson were well chosen to interest the pupils. The teacher boosted the pupils' self-esteem very well by pointing out when the targets had been achieved. There was a very good review of the work at the end of the lesson.

1.No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. However, there are some weaknesses even in sound teaching that would, if attended to, help all pupils make faster progress. Some of these are set out below:

- ◆. In mathematics, in a lesson on algebra, the teacher's aim was to get pupils to write down equations. The teacher wrote a number of questions on the blackboard to discuss with pupils. The range of question used in this process did not explore the pupils' understanding fully enough. The discussion was too brief and not enough examples were explored. Consequently, when pupils were set to work, the pace of the lesson was slower than it might have been and pupils made slower progress.
- ◆. In history, in a lesson on the First World War, the teacher did not provide pupils with sufficient advice on an essay about the Kaiser. In addition, no thought had been given to how pupils who had missed the video shown in the previous lesson could manage the task.
- ◆. In modern languages, in a lesson for pupils of mixed attainment the teacher was introducing new language. Effective techniques were used to ensure that the lowest-attaining pupils in the class grasped the new vocabulary but insufficient challenge was provided for higher-attaining pupils.

1.The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of these pupils and their specific difficulties. They relate well to them and motivate them very well so that they want to learn and will persevere when the work is difficult. Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' reading skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects. Their progress is especially good in those lessons where a learning support teacher or an assistant helps them. All pupils with special

educational needs have an individual education plan. These are very well written and set out appropriate sharply focussed short-term targets for their learning for both teachers and pupils to work towards. These plans are used effectively by teachers to ensure that work in lessons is well matched to pupils' attainment.

40. **The curriculum and assessment**

2.The college's statement of intent 'to establish a broad, balanced, coherent and relevant curriculum that equips students with knowledge and skills for life' is met well. Provision is broad and balanced and good arrangements are made for pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. The basic curriculum requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education are supplemented effectively by a good modular studies programme. This includes a very wide range of subjects such as aspects of literacy, numeracy, enterprise and citizenship, and these considerably enhance the basic curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to take part in community service are also provided within the modular studies programme.

3.The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all subjects except for art and information technology. In art, insufficient teaching time is provided; and in information technology, a combination of a shortage of teaching time and inadequate planning across the subjects of the curriculum, results in the requirements of the National Curriculum not being met. Although in physical education the requirements are met there is a bias towards games, with no gymnastics in Year 7.

4.Planning to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress as they move through the college is good. There are good links with the schools who send pupils to the college and also with those schools who receive pupils from the college. These links help to ensure that curriculum planning is good and that pupils' learning is disrupted as little as possible as they move between schools. For example, pupils in Year 6 in the primary school begin work on topics in the summer term that they will complete in the autumn term in Year 7 after they have begun at Ibstock. This work is planned jointly by teachers from the college and the primary schools.

5.The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very good. For most of their time in the college they are taught in classes alongside other pupils. They have very good individual education plans that are well used by teachers to ensure that their programme of work is well matched to their needs. On some occasions some of these pupils are withdrawn for lessons for additional help. The planning for these lessons is good, the activities used are appropriate and they ensure that pupils make good progress.

6.The length of the teaching week is in line with the national recommendations for Key Stage 3. The proportion of time allocated to subjects is in line with recommendations for all subjects except as indicated above for art and information technology. The time allocated to religious education has improved since the time of the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

7.There are good arrangements for equality of opportunity and for pupils' access to the curriculum. However, the rotation of groups of pupils around the topics studied in design and technology and art causes some unevenness in pupils' experiences. Thus, some pupils have longer periods of time studying some topics than others do. Pupils in Year 7 are taught in mixed attainment groups but in Years 8 and 9 they are effectively placed in groups according to their attainment in some subjects.

8.A well-planned personal and social education programme promotes these aspects of pupils' development. Sex education, moral education, health education, bullying and issues of drug misuse are included in the programme. Physical education, design and technology (food) and science also make an important contribution to pupils' understanding of health-related issues. Pupils spend a lesson each week with their tutors who also have an important responsibility for aspects of their personal and social education. Sound teaching schemes have been written

for this tutorial time, which is used well. Very good provision is made for careers education and guidance and a well-planned course about the world of work is taught in tutorial time. This is extremely well supported by the local careers service. An evening devoted to looking at future career possibilities is held each year for pupils and their parents. Local employers make a good contribution to this, as do representatives from further education colleges. The modular studies programme includes the opportunity for all pupils to undertake work in the community in Year 9.

9.A good range of extra-curricular opportunities further enhances curriculum provision. Many pupils participate in music through the choir and orchestra, and the college arranges for primary school pupils to take part in an orchestral workshop each term. A good number of sports are played and these are well supported by pupils and teachers. Five teachers help with teams that take part in fixtures with other schools. Over half of the pupils are involved in competitive sport which is encouraged through inter-form competitions which take place regularly. There is also a programme of visits organised to support aspects of the curriculum and the modern languages department arranges visits to France and visitors from Europe come into the college

10. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' work and these are making an important contribution to raising standards. The college has developed further the work it had begun at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are assessed regularly in each subject with the exception of information technology. The systems used are closely linked to the National Curriculum and examples of pupils' work are maintained by most subjects to help ensure accuracy in teachers' assessments. Pupils are given an indication of the National Curriculum level that they are working at. In many subjects this process is used very effectively to share information with pupils and to help them to make self-assessments and improvements in their levels of attainment. For example, in English, pupils are encouraged to assess their work against several components for each of the National Curriculum attainment targets. This is then used as a basis for discussion with their teacher who finally confirms their assessment.

11. Pupils' reading and spelling ages are measured before they enter the college and again at regular intervals. The parents of any pupil who has a reading age that is one year or more behind their actual age are invited to come to the college and become involved in helping their child make more rapid improvement. Tutors are involved in monitoring changes in pupils' reading ages and those who make unsatisfactory progress are identified and provided with help and encouragement.

12. The information from these assessment processes is used very effectively to help pupils to set targets for improvement. Parents are provided with very detailed information regarding their children's attainment. This includes pupils' reading ages, the results of the national tests for those in Year 9 and the teacher assessments of the National Curriculum levels attained for each subject.

13. The college analyses the results of the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 and those from teachers' assessments very carefully. The results of this analysis are used to monitor the work of subject departments and also to set targets for improvement.

14. The arrangements for assessing and reviewing the progress of pupils with special educational needs are excellent. Each pupil has an individual education plan that sets targets for their improvement. Subject teachers interpret these in the context of each subject and write targets for improvement within the subject. The progress made towards achieving these targets is reviewed at least once a term. For those pupils who have a statement for special educational needs, there is a formal annual review which, if appropriate, they attend along with their parents. At these reviews a report is presented by every subject about the progress that has been made towards the targets set for the subject.

53. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

15. The last inspection report drew attention to weaknesses in the college's approach to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The college was set the key issue for action of making improvements to this provision. Since then, considerable thought has been put into doing so, including, for example, adding statements about pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to the college's aims. In the action plan that was created as a response to the criticisms made by the inspection, the college's outline of improvements was not sufficiently sharply focussed and indicated some lack of understanding of how to bring about change. As a result, some aspects of its provision are still stronger than others. Nevertheless, there have been improvements and the overall picture is now largely good.

16. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The college has endeavoured to improve the spiritual content of assemblies and tutor time. Members of the senior management team and other teachers lead assemblies which take place three times each week. These are centred on appropriate spiritual themes such as giving, or valuing yourself and others, and a record is kept of the ideas used in an attempt to provide coherence between them. Good use is made of people from outside the college, for example, groups such as the Youth for Christ group are asked to lead assemblies occasionally. In the main, assemblies comply with requirements, and offer pupils some opportunity for reflection. On days when there is no assembly, the idea of a thought for the day was introduced into tutor time as an attempt to ensure that there was a daily act of collective worship. This provision has lapsed and the college does not comply with this requirement.

17. Across the curriculum in a number of subjects there has been a significant improvement in the provision that is planned for pupils' spiritual development. Most notably, religious education now fulfils a strong role in developing spiritual awareness. There are good planned opportunities for reflection and discussion included in lessons regularly to consider concepts such as personal responsibility and justice. History includes opportunities for pupils to reflect on aspects of their lives or the past. In music, the creative process does much to increase pupils' self-knowledge and develop their concept of self-worth. English puts the opportunities which regularly occur in drama and literature to good use. Overall, there are good opportunities within subjects for pupils to develop spiritually, but these have not been planned across the curriculum so that they offer a coherent programme for this purpose.

18. Provision for pupils' moral development remains good. A well thought-out code of conduct is prominently displayed in classrooms. This is strongly enforced by staff, both in lessons and around the college. The adults in the college provide very good role models for the pupils. Many subjects create opportunities for pupils to explore and discuss moral issues. For example, in their work on Judaism in religious education, pupils considered the ten commandments and their relevance to modern society. They also were asked to reflect on a range of connected moral issues, such as what the age of responsibility should be and whether a teenage boy in a northern town should be regarded as guilty of manslaughter, when, inadvertently, his blow results in the death of another pupil. Geography and science provide opportunities for pupils to discuss environmental issues, while history, drama and literature regularly focus on personal moral dilemmas or great human dramas such as the holocaust.

19. The arrangements for pupils' social development are very good. In many lessons they are required to work in groups or pairs and they are encouraged to relate positively to each other when collaborating on these tasks. In the daily organisation of the college, pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility. They take turns to work on the reception desk in the college's entrance area, organise chairs and the hall for assembly, act as guides for visitors and sell tickets for events organised by the college. They participate in teams for games and in musical groups such as the choir or orchestra. All of these help them to develop their social skills. A good course on citizenship uses visiting speakers such as local magistrates effectively

to help pupils develop a sense of wider society. A flourishing college council enables them to put forward their ideas and to act as representatives for their tutor groups. Links with the community are a particular strength and many pupils engage in community service. Individuals or small groups of pupils are encouraged to raise money for charities of their own choice. For example, they collect for a girl with leukaemia, support the local hospital and run activities to raise funds for several major charities.

20. The provision for cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils have well-developed opportunities to learn about their own culture through the subjects they study and also through some visits and extra-curricular activities. For example, the visit to Lincoln by pupils in Year 7 enables them to develop their understanding of the importance of the cathedral and the castle in medieval life. A number of subjects make important contributions that help pupils to develop their awareness of their own culture and heritage. In English, this happens through the study of literature, in geography and religious education through local surveys and history through studies of medieval realms and the development of industrial Britain. Provision is especially rich for Year 8 pupils, who are given the opportunity to dress in civil war costume and experience a session with a group from the Earl of Northampton's regiment.

21. Good provision is made for pupils to develop an awareness of their European heritage through modern foreign languages, music, history and geography. Each summer a group of pupils visit Switzerland and learn about aspects of the culture of another European country. The provision to help pupils to develop an understanding of the multicultural basis of modern society lacks some coherence. There is, however, some good practice in this area. For example, all pupils benefited from an anti-racism in sport initiative that was supported by Leicester City Football Club. In religious education, pupils study the beliefs, practices and rituals of several world faiths. In geography, pupils learn about a range of contrasting places and different cultures. In history, the life of Native American peoples forms part of the curriculum. In music, pupils hear and perform music from a range of non-European areas, such as India and China.

60. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

22. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, the college is very successful in creating a caring environment in which pupils feel secure, and the personal and social guidance available to them is of high quality.

23. Pupils' support, guidance and welfare are very well provided for through a good pastoral structure. Form tutors, year coordinators and senior managers all know their pupils well. They form very constructive relationships with them, and offer very thoughtful and caring support. The good relationships they create have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Relationships between pupils are good, and older pupils play a valuable role in sharing reading activities with younger pupils.

24. The college is part of a national pilot project set up to develop techniques for monitoring pupils' progress. The level of enthusiasm with which pupils and staff have begun these processes is impressive. In particular, pupils from Year 9 say how much they appreciate the new folders that detail their progress. They particularly like the good opportunities made available, through a Record of Achievement in each subject, to make them aware of the National Curriculum level at which they are working and how they might be able to achieve a higher level. The college has introduced this term the idea of pupils setting short-term targets for improvement. These are intended to be very **Specific**, and their achievement should be easily **Measured**. They should be **Attainable** by the pupils who set them, **Relevant** to their needs and can be achieved in a short **Time** interval. They are thus called **SMART** targets. Pupils have responded enthusiastically to this idea, although younger pupils are still learning to set specific, rather than more general, targets. When the system is fully implemented

throughout the college, it will provide an excellent means of monitoring pupils' academic progress and social development. Currently pupils' social development is monitored very effectively through regular discussions between form tutors and year coordinators.

25. During their time in the college pupils build up a record, which detail their achievements in all subjects and a wide range of activities. These Records of Achievement are of a high standard, and pupils value them. They provide an excellent means of liaison with the upper schools to which pupils will move after they leave Ibstock. They enable pupils to record their successes and achievements, which can then be built on by the teachers in these schools.

26. The college's code of conduct and well structured system of rewards for merit, are very effective in promoting the good behaviour of the vast majority of the college population. The college has high expectations that pupils will behave well, and they respond positively to these and to the praise and encouragement freely offered. When inappropriate behaviour does occur, this is handled sensitively and there are good procedures in place to ensure that such behaviour is managed consistently by all staff. The college deals well with bullying, and Year 7 pupils value the session about bullying during their first term in college. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and secure in college, that any incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively and that they are able to approach older pupils, or members of staff, for support if necessary.

27. The well-structured programme of personal and social education provides a wide range of information and experiences for pupils, and is of a very high standard. It contains the necessary elements of sex education, together with drug awareness. In addition, pupils study a wide range of moral issues, including prejudice, crime and its prevention, human rights, citizenship, and take part in a young enterprise project. A range of visitors, for example local community police, the college nurse and a teacher of travellers' children, provide valuable contributions to this programme, and augment the particular expertise that members of staff very effectively bring to their chosen areas of study. Year 9 pupils successfully undertake community placements, for example in the adjacent play centre and in local primary and infant schools. The careers adviser contributes very effectively to a "world of work" topic for Year 9 pupils, and during this half-term has been in college weekly for consultation by pupils. A careers evening held recently was well supported by a number of local employers.

28. The college's procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Regular weekly meetings are held between year coordinators and the vice-principal responsible for pastoral matters. She also meets weekly with the education welfare officer who intervenes appropriately when pupils' attendance is a cause for concern. Reasons for absence are checked appropriately, although a small number of parents do not appreciate the importance of regular attendance, and fail to ensure that their children attend college regularly.

29. The college has effective child protection procedures that meet the statutory requirements. In terms of pupils' safety, risk assessments have been carried out across the college, and a comprehensive review has just been undertaken of procedures in connection with the swimming pool. All electrical equipment is checked, and fire drills carried out regularly.

30. The high quality of the personal and social guidance and advice available to pupils continues to make a very good contribution to the quality of education in the college.

69. Partnership with parents and the community

31.The majority of parents continue to be very supportive of the college, and feel that they are welcome there. Many take advantage of the adult education courses that take place on college premises. They generally feel encouraged to play an active part in the life of the college, but, as was the case at the last inspection, some would like to be more fully involved in the life of the college. Parents support musical performances well, and some help with transport to sporting events. Attendance at the evenings organised for parents to consult teachers about the children's work is generally good, although some parents live some distance from the college, and they have problems of transport and childcare.

32.The quality of information provided for parents with regard to the levels of achievement of their children has improved greatly recently and is now good. Annual reports provide a satisfactory level of information, but do not always describe the progress pupils have made and there is a lack of precise information about what pupils know and can do. However, reports are very effectively augmented by additional information at the end of the summer term. At the end of last summer term, parents were given teachers' assessments in terms of the National Curriculum for all subjects, together with pupils' reading ages. Pupils are given an opportunity contribute to their annual reports through writing a self-assessment and parents say that they appreciate this.

33.The governors' annual report to parents lacks some important details. These include, for example, the college policy for pupils with special educational needs and information about college security.

34.During the first term in Year 7, the parents of pupils whose reading ages are identified as being below average are invited into college, and given guidelines and advice as to how they can help their child. In addition, all parents are sent an assessment of how well their child has settled into their new college through a series of grades concerning effort and attitude for each subject. The parents of any child about whom a tutor has concerns is invited to come into college discuss these. Parents of Year 7 children not so identified say that they would appreciate an opportunity to discuss how their child has settled into the college. Inspectors support this view.

35.Parents approve of the introduction of the homework diaries, which give them an opportunity to monitor the homework done by their children, and most parents sign these weekly. Some parents say they would appreciate more frequent newsletters.

36.Liaison with the schools from which pupils transfer is very good. There are good procedures in place to ensure a smooth transition. A development group consisting of headteachers from these schools and from the college meets regularly. In addition, representative teachers also meet regularly to discuss work in subjects. The introduction of some topics that pupils begin in Year 6, and then continue at the college in Year 7, is useful in helping pupils settle quickly to familiar work in new surroundings. This approach has also been introduced for pupils in Year 9, who make an early start, following their National Curriculum tests, on the work they will continue in the upper schools. Liaison with the two upper schools to which most pupils transfer is good and this assists a smooth transition and an effective start in their courses for the General Certificate of Secondary Education.

37.The college enjoys a wide range of visitors who make valuable contributions to the curriculum, particularly within the modular studies and the personal, social and health education programmes. The number of visits into the local and wider community is limited, but those that do take place, for example to Lincoln in history and the Derbyshire Dales in geography, are used well within the curriculum. Pupils take part in raising money for different charities during the year and some of these are community based. Visits to Switzerland and France give some pupils a good opportunity to extend their knowledge and widen their range

of social experiences.

38.The college has started to extend its involvement with commerce and industry through its links with the Training and Enterprise Council. The links that have been established are used effectively, for example, by inviting local employers to support a recently held evening to explain career possibilities to pupils and parents. There is good liaison with the careers advisory service.

39.The college continues to enjoy good links and a positive relationship with the community, and these are particularly enhanced as a result of its designated community status. Access to a play centre, after school and summer activities enable younger children and their parents to engage with staff and the college facilities in a positive way before the children join the college at the age of 11. Many adults use the college on a regular basis throughout the day, and the youth club provides a good range of social experiences for older pupils and other young people.

40.There are many good examples of additional resources being provided for the college through its community links. These include the community association mini-bus, the computers provided in partnership with the nearby Stephenson college, the internet links through Ibstock Community Enterprise (a group of local business people) and enhanced sports staffing through the District Council. There is extensive use of the college's swimming pool by community groups, and other schools. The college enjoys good links with local sports teams and clubs, and receives support from Leicester City Football Club in its work in combating racism and in rewarding good attendance. There is a particularly strong link with Leicester Arts Fair, when pupils have valuable opportunities to take part in musical activities in conjunction with local schools. These community links continue to make a positive contribution to the life and ethos of the college.

79. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE COLLEGE

79. Leadership and management

41.The new principal provides very strong leadership and clear and purposeful direction for the work of the college. He does this very effectively and energetically through working alongside teachers and leading by example. The governing body works in partnership with the principal to ensure that the college is well led. They have a clear sense of the aims of the college and a concern to raise standards, and their work is well informed by these considerations. Through the work of their committees and the oversight provided by the governor with responsibility for special educational needs, the governing body has helped to ensure that important strategic steps have been taken to help in raising pupils' attainment.

42.The vice-principals and senior teacher are well deployed and provide very good support for the principal both in helping in the day-to-day management of the college and in leading important aspects of development. Good leadership is provided by middle managers for the work in subjects and for the pastoral care of pupils, although there are weaknesses in information technology.

43.The college has produced an excellent plan to demonstrate how it will develop over time. Its key consideration is that of raising attainment. All staff and governors have contributed to the clear and appropriate targets which have been set for doing this. Each target has been carefully costed to ensure that sufficient funding has been provided to enable the target to be met. The plan sets out who is responsible for leading the work that will be need to be done and mechanisms for monitoring developments. The college plan is very well supported by a development plan for each of the subjects. These demonstrate how each subject will contribute to the whole college's development. It is clear that this process provides governors with an excellent means for sharing in the leadership of the college and overseeing its

development.

44. There are good processes in place for monitoring and supporting teaching and curriculum development. Each subject department takes part in a regular review process that involves the observation of teaching and a survey of pupils' work. This activity often also involves asking pupils for their views of the lessons and the teaching. Governors have their own evaluation procedures. Two governors visit each subject department, investigate its work and report their findings back to the whole governing body.

45. The college has an appropriate set of aims and values and a good set of policies to ensure that these are met. Teachers work together very effectively as a team to implement these policies and to follow the principles set out in the college's aims. Relationships throughout the college are very good. Teachers have a very friendly and open approach to pupils and pupils, in the main, want to support and help each other. This can be seen most clearly in the mentoring scheme described earlier in which pupils help each other to set targets for improvement. The college has a very good ethos in which there are high expectations for the attainment and behaviour of pupils. There is a concern to ensure that pupils have equality of opportunity and this is reflected particularly in the provision for and teaching of pupils with special educational needs. In a similar way, the college is developing activities to help extend the highest attaining pupils and taking measures to help overcome the differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

46. Since the last inspection the college has developed well. The key issues for action that were identified then have largely been addressed. For example, the required improvements to mathematics and religious education have been made. However, the concerns expressed about art in the last inspection report have not been fully dealt with. The results in the National Curriculum tests have not improved, although they have stayed broadly in line with pupils' attainment on entry to the college. Clear and effective strategies for the improvement of attainment have been introduced. These include a college-wide literacy programme, new processes for setting pupils short-term targets for their improvement and a new process for the careful monitoring of pupils' progress. These innovations are beginning to have an effect and inspectors report that there are signs of attainment rising in Years 7 and 8. The college has sensible targets for improvement and its planning for future development demonstrates that it is very well placed to achieve them.

47. In the main the college meets the statutory requirements, however it does not do so in the following areas:

- It does not ensure that there is a daily act of collective worship.
- It does not ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum for information technology are met.
- It does not ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum for art are met.
- It does not ensure that all of the required information is included in the governors' annual report to parents.

• **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

1. There are sufficient teachers to match the requirements of the curriculum. A high proportion of them have been at the college for a long time but regular training has ensured that they are well prepared for the demands that teaching their subject places on them. They are well qualified for the subjects they teach, with the exception of religious education. Although teachers of this subject do not hold a formal qualification in it, the additional training provided for them has ensured that religious education is taught effectively. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Topics taught in the modular studies programme are often outside the teachers' subject specialism, but they have sufficient knowledge of these topics for this to work successfully. Overall their teaching in this area of the curriculum provides an important experience that helps to broaden pupils' education.

2.All teachers have detailed job descriptions. Those for the vice-principals now accurately describe the roles they undertake, which was not the case at the time of the last inspection.

3.In spite of the majority of teaching staff being female, there is no apparent gender bias in the college. Although there are more male members of staff in senior positions, a number of women below the level of head of department have important and significant roles. For example, women have key responsibilities in the coordination of literacy and in the development of information technology.

4.Overall, in most areas the college has an adequate number of support staff with appropriate qualifications and experience. There is only one part-time technician to meet the demands of the science laboratories who nevertheless manages to fulfil her role very competently. The librarian provides part-time support for information technology. At present she lacks sufficient training to support the college's computer network fully and this is having a negative impact on standards. The support provided by teaching assistants for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support for these pupils is enhanced through the use of teaching staff who have a slightly reduced teaching load working as assistants in some lessons. The system works well.

5.Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. Training programmes work well and are linked very effectively to the plan that outlines the college's development needs. There is a good induction programme for new members of staff, including those teachers who are newly qualified, that ensures that they are well supported and helped during their first year at the college. The process of staff appraisal is, at this juncture, under review in an attempt to define a model that meets the specific demands of the college. However, a system that includes an annual professional review for each member of staff is planned. In addition, there is a monitoring and evaluation system that operates through subject departments. This involves an observation of teaching and a review of pupils' work. A group of teachers, led by one of the vice-principals, acts as a professional development working party. They work with the subject department undergoing review to identify specific targets and requirements for the review. Training provision itself is not yet monitored and evaluated, and this is a weakness, although the college does have plans to incorporate a system for evaluation.

6.The general accommodation is satisfactory and is enhanced by good quality displays. It is well maintained and there is a clear rationale for its refurbishment and redecoration. Accommodation in science is poor and this was a point that was noted at the time of the last inspection. The laboratories are old and out-dated. They lack adequate storage space and this poses a potential health and safety risk. There is also a shortage of fume cupboards. Within both the mathematics and the humanities departments some teaching problems are created by the quality of two of the teaching rooms. This is because, in each case, dividing one large room into two by means of filing cabinets and display boards has been used as a means of solving a shortage of accommodation. The partitioning of rooms in this superficial way is inadequate. It limits considerably the scope available to the teacher for teaching the lesson and pupils are regularly distracted by what occurs on the other side of the partition.

7.The college is well provided with playing fields for sports activities. Both the college and the community use the sports hall. It is in urgent need of a new floor. The existing one is not level and the surface covering poses a potential risk to health and safety. The changing facilities for the swimming pool suffer from the disadvantage of having no separate wet and dry areas, posing a possible risk to health and safety.

8.The overall quantity and quality of learning resources is broadly satisfactory. Any shortages are managed and limit any serious impact on educational standards. This is attributable largely to the resourcefulness of staff. Shortages of resources in art limit the experiences available to pupils. In science, there are shortages in several areas. These include items such electronic balances and a range of equipment. The lack of appropriate computer facilities also poses a number of problems for science. The suitability and provision of textbooks is generally satisfactory, although there are some shortages in mathematics and for Year 9 pupils in science. The availability of books and computer software from the library is good. This provision is enhanced by the fact that the library is also a community facility.

94.

94. **The efficiency of the college**

9.The overall efficiency of the college is very good. Very careful financial planning supports its work. The governors and headteacher have a clear long-term view for the development of the college and for raising standards. The college development plan is central to these aims. After the allocation of funds for major fixed costs such as teaching, the college has limited resources for developments. The allocation of these funds to support each aspect of the development plan is carefully considered against the primary aim of raising attainment. As a result, each target for development is carefully costed to ensure efficient and effective use of funds. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Governors and staff are involved in reviewing the success achieved in meeting the targets set in the development plan and the value for money given by their spending decisions.

10.The deployment of staff, including support staff is very effective and has a good impact on the attainment of pupils. There is very little teaching by teachers outside of their subject specialism. Since the time of the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in the provision of specialist teaching in religious education. The specific grant provided for pupils with special educational needs is used very well and the provision for these pupils is very good. Spending on each section of the budget is in line with the averages for other schools with the exception of that for cleaning and occupancy costs. These are higher because of the community status of the college. Members of the community use parts of the building, including the community library and meeting rooms, throughout the day as well as during the evenings and weekends. The use of accommodation in the college is generally efficient, however the library and computer rooms are underused facilities. Although the amount of money allocated to resources is low when compared with other schools nationally, resources are judged to be adequate for the needs of the curriculum, except in science.

11.Financial control is very good. A recent audit report raised minor issues that have been dealt with promptly. Information is provided regularly for governors, the principal and heads of department to ensure a careful check is kept on spending. The administration of the college is very efficient including the well-run reception area which ensures that visitors are provided with a warm welcome.

12.Overall, the attainment of the pupils when they enter the college is below average. The funding per pupil is below that of other schools nationally. The quality of education provided, particularly that of teaching, is good. Pupils make good progress, and when they leave the college their attainment is average. Overall the college provides good value for money.

98. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

98. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

98. English

13. Based on evidence from the inspection, observation of lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' work, attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 3 is judged to be in line with national averages. The results of the national tests in 1999 show that the numbers of pupils gaining the nationally expected level 5 was close to the average and the proportion attaining the higher level 6 was below average. Overall attainment was below the average for all schools. It was well below average for similar schools, that is schools having a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment in the national tests in English was similar to that in mathematics but below that in science. The results for 1998 were also below average for all schools and well below average for similar schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the college as measured by their reading ages has varied over time but has been below average, and at times well below average, although for the current Year 7 for the first time attainment on entry was above average. There is evidence to show that attainment in the college is rising: pupils in Years 7 and 8 are generally attaining at levels above those expected for their age.

14. Almost all pupils talk confidently in both formal and informal situations and they listen carefully to the teacher and each other, showing their understanding by asking and answering relevant questions. Most pupils read fluently. They can extract information from texts and can recognise emotive and persuasive language and bias in what they read. Most can select key sentences to support their views. Higher and some average attainers can identify layers of meaning in poetry and can write effective poetry of their own in a similar style to poets they have studied. Pupils' handwriting and spelling have improved since the time of the last inspection when they were said to be a problem for a number of pupils. All pupils write legibly and they have benefited from attention given in the department to teaching them strategies for learning to spell words they find difficult. They produce writing in a good range of different forms such as newspaper reports, leaflets, literary appreciation, poetry and creative writing.

15. In the national tests, the attainment of boys is below that of girls to a greater degree than that normally found. The department recognises this and has begun work on strategies to improve boys' attainment.

16. Progress in English is good for pupils of all levels of attainment. The college's commitment to initiatives designed to raise levels of literacy is clearly having a positive impact. Twice a week for twenty minutes the weakest readers read with teachers or other pupils in the paired and group reading schemes whilst all other pupils in the college read silently. Teachers in all subject departments have received training on and use strategies to improve pupils' reading and writing. There is an extra literacy module in the modular studies programme in Year 7 for those whose literacy is poor but not poor enough to warrant being taken out of English lessons for extra help. The college has identified and targeted support for all those pupils in Year 7 with a reading age significantly below their actual age, including interviewing parents to enlist their help and support for their children. The teaching scheme and teaching methods used by teachers in the English department are clearly designed to improve pupils' literacy and their attainment generally. In lessons, work is well matched to the differing needs of different pupils in the groups. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans and teachers use these well to set them clear short term-targets for improvement. The good progress of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is clearly evident from the improvements in their reading ages. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged, especially in the groups of pupils with similar attainment in Year 9 and in the lunchtime extension class for the highest attainers in Year 8. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection.

17. Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes in English lessons. They show a high level of interest and concentrate well on their work, both when listening to the teacher and when working independently in pairs or groups. Almost throughout their behaviour is excellent. They listen with respect to what others have to say and are willing to make guesses in answer to questions or to develop their thinking as they speak, secure in the knowledge that they will not be ridiculed. In one drama lesson where the pupils arrived a little before the teacher they showed initiative and their good attitudes to work by arranging the room and beginning a 'warm-up' activity suggested in previous lessons by the teacher.

18. All the teaching is good and almost four lessons out of ten are very good. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection when teaching was described as mostly sound or better. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and the National Curriculum and how to ensure that pupils make good progress through it. They have high expectations of pupils both in terms of work and behaviour. Standards of discipline are always high. Lessons are well planned with activities which are carefully designed to raise pupils' attainment. The pace of lessons is brisk: often not a moment is wasted. Teachers assess pupils' written work informally in class and give them immediate support and encouragement to enable them to improve it as they redraft it. Marking is well done and teachers suggest specific strategies for improvement to pupils. Homework is used very well to extend the work done in class.

19. The department is very well led and the committed team of teachers works very well together. There is much joint planning and sharing of resources which is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. The department is involved in a county pilot project which is trialling a new teaching scheme. This is very well planned and matched to the National Curriculum. It provides continuity through the college and also with the work done in Key Stages 2 and 4. This is in contrast to the situation at the time of the last inspection when the teaching scheme was judged to be too brief and insufficiently linked to the National Curriculum.

20. Drama is an important part of English lessons and, in addition, is taught on a rotational basis as part of the modular studies programme. It enables pupils to work towards a better understanding of the characters and their situations in the novels they are reading in class. It also provides an opportunity for pupils to reflect on such issues as family relationships and peer pressure in relation to smoking, drinking and drugs. Teaching was always good and at times very good in the lessons seen.

21. In other subjects pupils are given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. They work in pairs or groups to discuss what they are doing in many subjects, and teachers' skilful use of questions, for example in humanities and music, encourages them to develop and extend their answers and to justify their views and opinions. Teachers help pupils to improve their spelling by displaying and referring to keywords for each topic. Pupils are given very useful help with structuring longer pieces of written work in most subjects and this has a positive effect on their attainment and progress.

107. **Mathematics**

22. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is close to the national average. In the 1999 national tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected level 5 was below average while that achieving the higher level 6 was close to the average. Overall, however, these results were below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. This picture is similar to that shown by the 1998 results. Over the last three years girls have achieved significantly better results than boys have. Results in mathematics are similar to those in English but not as good as those in science. Over the three years 1996 to 1998 pupils' average levels have improved at a similar rate to national averages.

23. By the end of the key stage, pupils' skills with number are generally satisfactory. For the higher-attaining pupils these skills are well developed and they are able to apply them well. All pupils are developing their confidence in handling numbers through the regular practice of mental arithmetic in lessons. Year 9 pupils can compare fractions, decimals and percentages with some assurance. In geography, pupils use percentages confidently when extracting information and in design and technology pupils are able to calculate gear ratios. Pupils' skills in algebra are weak at the start of Year 7 when they join the college but by the end of the key stage most pupils can write and solve equations. Work in pupils' books shows the concepts of shape and space are being developed well and pupils in Year 7 have an increasing understanding of polygons. In science, pupils can use a range of measuring apparatus accurately. Their skills in data-handling are satisfactory and most of them can produce tally charts, draw graphs and calculate averages. In geography, pupils use these skills well to examine statistical information effectively. Pupils' problem-solving skills are good and in Year 9 they are able to investigate problems, identify patterns, establish rules and predict and test, results. The highest-attaining pupils can work independently applying these skills to extend their investigations.

24. Overall pupils' progress is satisfactory. The department groups pupils into a highest-attaining class and two classes of mixed attainment. Pupils in the highest-attaining class make good progress. This could be seen in a Year 9 lesson where they were using trigonometry very well to find lengths and angles. The pace of progress of the highest-attaining pupils in the mixed attainment classes in Years 8 and 9 is slower. The wide range of attainment levels in these classes is making it difficult for teachers to ensure that these pupils are keeping pace with other similar pupils in the top sets. The progress of average-attaining pupils is satisfactory. In Year 7 where pupils are taught in classes of mixed attainment, progress is also satisfactory. This could be seen clearly in a lesson where they were given good opportunities to consolidate their understanding of percentages. Lower-attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress with number skills through lessons on numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans and teachers use these well to set them clear short-term targets for improvement. These pupils are making good progress when they work with a support assistant in lessons. Where this support is not available their progress is satisfactory.

25. Pupils show good attitudes to their learning. They behave very well in lessons and are interested in their work. They concentrate well and work productively on tasks they have been given. The work in their books is usually well presented and charts, diagrams and tables are drawn well. Pupils listen attentively when teachers are talking, and when asked questions they speak clearly and are usually able to use appropriate mathematical language. Relationships with teachers are good and this helps to motivate pupils. When they are required to work collaboratively, pupils share ideas well.

26. Teaching is good. It is always at least satisfactory and in two-thirds of lessons it is good or better, while close to a further third of them are very good. There have been significant changes in the department's personnel: 3 out of the 4 teachers have joined the college over the last 2 years. Since they have not taught pupils throughout their time in Key Stage 3, the effects of their good teaching have not yet had a chance to make a full impact on Key Stage 3 test results. There has, however, already been an improvement in the number of pupils gaining the higher levels over the last 2 years.

27. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to explain concepts clearly to pupils. Their lesson planning is good. They make good links with the content to that of earlier lessons and to those planned for the future. The methods and organisation used in most lessons are good and the activities provided to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are appropriate. They meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Learning support assistants are used effectively to help those with difficulties. Teachers help to ensure that pupils develop their numerical skills very effectively by forbidding the use of

calculators in many lessons. On these occasions, a clear emphasis is given to developing processes of mental arithmetic. The management of pupils is good. Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace and time is used effectively. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly. The marking of pupils' work is generally done thoroughly, although this often lacks sufficient comments about what pupils should do to improve. Good use is made of homework to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.

28.The leadership and management of the subject are very good. In the short time she has been at the college the head of department has provided a clear direction for the subject. Planning for development is good. Teachers are committed to improving standards and have introduced good new teaching schemes and assessment procedures to enable pupils to make better progress. The new schemes of work have led to the introduction of a new textbook, which means that, at the moment, there is a shortage of textbooks. In one lesson during the inspection pupils were taught to use spreadsheets, but generally computers are not used sufficiently. One aspect of the accommodation for mathematics is unsatisfactory. One large classroom is used to teach two classes. There is no dividing wall between the classes and the difficulties created by sound from one area of the room intruding into the other restricts opportunities for group and practical work.

29.At the last inspection mathematics was identified as having a number of significant weaknesses, particularly in the teaching of higher-attaining pupils. Important improvements have been made. Standards are now in line with the nationally expected level. Teaching schemes have been rewritten with activities that are well matched to the needs of pupils. As a result, the time in lessons is now used well and teaching is conducted with sufficient rigour to ensure the highest-attaining pupils do well.

115. **Science**

30.Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as seen during the inspection is average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as measured by the national tests in 1999 was close to the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected level 5 was average, as was the proportion attaining level 6. However, the results for all pupils are in line with the average for all schools but well below those for similar schools. Pupils' attainment in the national tests is better in science than in English and mathematics. The 1998 results reflected a similar pattern for pupils attaining levels 5 and 6. The results for all pupils were close to the national average for all schools and were also close to the average for similar schools. For the years 1996-1998 together, the pupils' performance in science was again similar to the national pattern. The performance of girls over the years since 1996 is marginally better than that of boys.

31.At the end of Key Stage 3, higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of basic scientific principles, and they are able to apply them in practical and in problem-solving contexts. Pupils' abilities to plan investigations and to evaluate findings are good, showing a distinct improvement since the time of the last inspection. Their capacities to focus their minds on challenging exercises and to pursue processes of scientific investigation have also improved since then. Overall, all pupils take considerable pride in the presentation of their work. The ability to understand and to apply numerical data is confined to the higher-attaining pupils and many pupils find some difficulty in transferring skills taught in mathematics to their practical application in science. Levels of literacy are good and the quality of written work of even lower-attaining pupils is of a satisfactory standard. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are acquiring a sound knowledge of the digestive system and what contributes to a "balanced diet", including the special requirements of vegetarians. They can recall the location of the digestive organs and appreciate their role in the digestive process. They know about chemical processes and simple chemical reactions. They have an understanding of forces, the movement of electrons, and of electrical circuits.

32.The great majority of pupils are making good progress. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and that of girls. Pupils consolidate their scientific knowledge and understanding, and they acquire sound practical skills and techniques. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into classes and their progress is generally good. The quality of the help provided for them by learning support teachers or assistants is very good. The pupils have very good individual education plans and teachers use these well to help them make progress.

33.Pupils are invariably polite, pleasant and compliant. Throughout the college they are attentive and they have a good attitude to their work. Work is presented on time and pupils take pride in its appearance. The great majority of them show a genuine interest in their lessons and they display considerable application. This could be seen in a Year 7 lesson on the special characteristics of metals and their comparative behaviour. Here pupils were able to carry out their practical work in small groups before returning to working as a class and writing up their findings. The manner in which they worked together and recorded their findings was typical of many lessons where they displayed not only an enthusiasm for the subject but also good skills of cooperation. Behaviour throughout all lessons is exemplary; pupils are invariably courteous to their teachers and pleasantly disposed to each other. The teachers reciprocate this courtesy.

34.Teaching is always satisfactory or better and in almost all lessons it is good. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons typically begin with an introduction and an explanation of the context before the pupils embark on a practical exercise in small groups. The teaching scheme is carefully planned and thoughtfully structured. This helps teachers to prepare their lessons well and to deliver them with enthusiasm. Lessons are planned to ensure that pupils' needs are met and the work is well matched to their respective levels of attainment. Time is used effectively and lessons are conducted at a suitable pace. Discipline is good and classroom management is of a high order. The rapport between teachers and pupils is friendly and caring. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high. Appropriate homework is set regularly. Pupils' exercise books are marked routinely and teachers write constructive and encouraging comments to help pupils to improve.

35.The department is very well managed and there is a good corporate spirit amongst the staff. The technician provides competent support for the subject. However, the demands on one part-time technician are high and, ideally, additional support is required. The quality of the textbooks available to the pupils is good, but they are inadequate in number for Year 9 pupils. Accommodation in science is poor. The existing laboratories and preparation areas are very old and this makes for difficulties in teaching the curriculum and, as a result, has a negative effect on standards. There is only one fume cupboard available and this is unsatisfactory. There are shortages of important pieces of laboratory equipment. For example, there is only one top-pan balance and there are no electronic thermometers. A shortage of computers means that these are not used in the way envisaged by the National Curriculum to support important aspects of the science teaching. There is also a shortage of textbooks for pupils in Year 9.

121. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

121. Art

36.Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. This is because pupils have less time for art at this key stage than is usual in other schools. As a result, they are not taught the full range of the National Curriculum for art. The attainment of the majority of pupils in lessons in the elements of the curriculum they do study is at least in line with national expectations. However, because the range of art activities is limited by constraints of time, the overall level of attainment at the end of the key stage is lower than would normally be expected. In 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessment indicated that two-thirds of

the pupils were meeting or exceeding national expectations. This is below the national average figure for 1998. The 1999 figure is not yet available for this comparison to be made.

37. A majority of pupils in Year 9 can produce some individual pieces of work above average levels of attainment. For example, their drawings of knotted ties effectively use line, tone and colour to show a good understanding of shape and form. Pupils of average attainment in Year 8 combine a variety of mixed media confidently to produce pictures of interlocking shapes based on a logo theme. Lower-attaining pupils have a less well-developed control of media. For example, in the Year 7 colour project, they experience some difficulty in producing subtle colour changes as they attempt to create a colour ladder.

38. Overall progress in art is unsatisfactory. Again, this is because there is insufficient time devoted to the teaching of art. By the end of the key stage all pupils, including those with special educational needs have made satisfactory progress in two-dimensional work. The satisfactory progress made by pupils in lessons can be seen, for example, in Year 7 where pupils apply colour-mixing skills in paintings of flowers, exploring a limited range on their pallet. Similarly, in Year 8, when observing collections of objects pupils make drawings which explore shape, form and texture using different drawing media. Year 9 pupils make satisfactory progress in their understanding of art, when in the "Four in One" project pupils investigate different art styles and use these as a stimulus for their own work. However, their progress in the use of a wider range of two and three-dimensional media and in collecting drawings and other information in sketchbooks is unsatisfactory. At the time of the last inspection pupils were said to make less progress in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7. Pupils now make similar progress in all years.

39. The attitudes of pupils in lessons are often good and never less than satisfactory. Lessons are well ordered and pupils behave very well showing respect for each other and for their teacher. They respond well to questions and are able to express their own point of view about their work and that of others. Pupils show care for their own work and that of others and they clearly value what they do in art lessons.

40. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and it is good in just under half of lessons. The teacher shows a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and careful thought is given to the way lessons and projects are planned and matched to the needs of all pupils. Resources are used effectively and prepared beforehand to ensure that time in lessons is used well. Displays of pupils' work both in the classroom and about the college are good and these are used effectively to help motivate them. However, homework is not used sufficiently to encourage all pupils to contribute to their work in art through the use of a sketchbook. Pupils receive a good amount of informal feedback about how well they are doing during lessons but there is no formal assessment of pupils' work until the end of each module of work. By this time pupils have finished studying art for the year. Thus, the use of this assessment as a means of helping them to target areas for improvement is less effective. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was described as sound, and it was mostly undertaken by supply teachers. The appointment of a full-time specialist teacher has improved the consistency and quality of teaching.

41. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is largely because the time devoted to art is significantly below the recommended amount. The teaching programme is divided into modules of time. In each year pupils study one module of art for a maximum of eight weeks and then do not do so again until they are in the next year of their college career. This problem is exacerbated for half of the pupils in each year group. Where numbers are larger and more classes have to be created to accommodate this, the number of weeks available for studying each module is shorter. Some additional time is provided in Year 8, but this still does not enhance the provision sufficiently. The results of this arrangement are that there is no continuity of experience as pupils move through the key stage, they have little or no opportunity to express

themselves in three-dimensions, or to use a wider range of two-dimensional media. This situation has remained unchanged since the last inspection.

42. Art is taught in one specialist room, which is well organised and cared for. The resources available allow for only a limited provision for two-dimensional work, and almost none for three-dimensional work.

128. **Design and technology**

43. In 1998, teachers' assessment indicated that attainment at Key Stage 3 was a little above the national average, with about two thirds of pupils attaining level 5 or above. In 1999 the results were similar although the national average is not yet available to enable this comparison to be made. The levels of attainment seen in lessons support this picture of above average attainment. Higher-attaining pupils design with confidence, developing ideas and using high quality graphical skills to present them. For example, in electronics, they develop solutions to design problems with the construction of circuits using the flashing light systems they have made. Pupils of average attainment also work to a good standard but their designing skills are less well developed and their graphical presentation is less sophisticated. The products they make, however, show confidence in manufacture. For example, in the clock project, a range of materials such as wood and plastic are successfully combined to make a variety of different clocks for different locations. Pupils of lower attainment produce very simple design solutions, and the well-structured teaching scheme helps them focus on how best to approach their work. This can be seen clearly in the teaching of food where pupils are asked to develop a new product. The clear structure of the teaching programme and the variety of tasks pupils are required to engage in help them to improve their levels of attainment. Since the last inspection levels of attainment have improved.

44. Pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection when progress was described as satisfactory. The teaching scheme enables pupils to acquire a specific range of making skills as well as the more broadly based designing skills. The quality of planning between different modules of work ensures that pupils make good progress in acquiring skills of making with wood, plastic and food, and, as a result, standards in making are above average. Pupils also acquire a practical understanding of control, structures, mechanisms and electronics. For example, through building small working models they increase their understanding of gears by using a small electric motor to lift a one-kilogram weight. In food, a good understanding of the importance of hygiene in the production of food is developed. Their work in modular studies makes a significant contribution to the pupils' progress in this area by providing an opportunity for them to gain a recognised certificate in food hygiene. Boys and girls make similar progress in making and also in the development of ideas. However, overall girls make more progress than boys because they show greater attention to detail in work in their design folder, and are more willing to enhance and extend their work in their own time. Pupils with special educational need have individual education plans and teachers use these well to set them clear short-term targets for improvement. These pupils make good progress.

45. Pupils have good attitudes and enjoy their work in all areas of the design and technology curriculum. They behave very well, are responsible in the workshops and understand the need for safe working practices. Pupils work well together. A good example is the Year 7 structures project where pupils working in pairs build a tower and test it to destruction. They listen to instructions and answer questions willingly, making perceptive comments about how successful a design solution might be. This is seen in the downhill racer project where pupils help one another to find the best design solution to the task set. Many higher-attaining pupils show well-developed independent learning skills, enhancing and

extending design folder work in their own time. This good attitude to learning has a positive impact on the progress pupils make.

46. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and a good grasp of technical skills and processes. This can be seen in the many demonstrations they give that emphasise good and safe working practices. They have high expectations of their pupils, give good technical instruction, build confidence and encourage their positive participation in lessons. One aspect of teaching that is less good is the use of homework. Whilst pupils are encouraged to do extension work in their own time, homework is not set regularly, with the result that all pupils are not required to work in their own time. The assessment that takes place at the end of each module of work is well linked to pupils' records of achievement. At the moment, in many of the modules studied, assessment takes place at the end and there is no formal on-going assessment to help pupils to set targets for improvement as work proceeds.

47. The design and technology curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in full but not all pupils have equal access to it. Half the pupils do not do some of the control modules, with the result that attainment and progress in these areas is reduced for these pupils. All modules of work have an component of information technology and pupils do a small amount of computer-aided design. However, across the whole of the department, the use of computers is not well integrated into the teaching scheme.

133. **Geography**

48. By the end of Key Stage 3, evidence from lessons and pupils' work shows they attain standards in line with pupils of a similar age nationally. In 1998 teachers' assessments showed the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels to be slightly above the national averages. The results of teachers' assessments for 1999 were similar to those for 1998 but as yet the national average is not available for 1999 and the comparison with this figure cannot be made. Girls attain higher standards than boys do, but in the same proportions as is the case nationally.

49. By the end of the key stage, pupils can use information from atlases and maps with confidence. They handle statistical information well, as shown in work on the climate of the British Isles and when comparing the population of a number of countries. Pupils understand the different features of developed and developing countries and can apply these when studying specific countries such as Brazil. They have a clear understanding of geographical themes, for example the effect of rivers on the landscape, and make links between human and physical geography in their studies on settlements. Pupils describe how tourism can have both positive and negative effects on the environment. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills and whole class discussions are of a good standard. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection when concerns were raised about the lack of opportunities for pupils to engage in structured discussions. Pupils make confident use of their numeracy skills when using graphs and tables both to extract and present information.

50. Pupils enter the college with differing experiences and levels of attainment in geography but all make good progress. The introductory programme in Year 7 is well planned to provide a sound basis of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. The topics covered move from studies of local areas to a study of Europe and Italy in particular. This is a good preparation for the work in Years 8 and 9, and by the end of the key stage the majority of pupils are attaining standards in line with national expectations. Progress in lessons is good, resulting both from good teaching and the interest and curiosity of the pupils about the world in which they live. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans and teachers use these well to set them clear short-term targets for improvement. These pupils make good progress as they develop a sound understanding of the more factual elements of

the work. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress. They begin to question the reasons for why things are as they are and they make meaningful comparisons based on careful examination of evidence and data.

51. Pupils have good attitudes and enjoy geography. This shows in their keenness to take part in class discussions and their high levels of concentration. They behave very well in lessons, work well on written tasks and complete their homework. Geography makes a very good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development through discussions of contentious issues, for example those relating to the environment. Pupils listen carefully to the opinions of others and respond appropriately, even when they disagree.

52. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is now always good and at times very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and skilfully link facts to the key skills and themes of geography. They are enthusiastic about the subject; they communicate this to pupils and successfully plan tasks that interest them. Individual lessons and modules of work are planned carefully to reflect the overall requirements of the teaching scheme and the methods used to assess the progress made by pupils. A particular strength of the teaching is the quality of the questions teachers ask pupils. These are carefully matched to the level of understanding of individual pupils; they support and encourage the lower attainers and extend the work of the higher attainers as they learn to make judgements for themselves. In a good lesson in Year 8, for example, the teacher used questions to lead pupils to use their knowledge and understanding from previous work to suggest reasons and give explanations for the effect of rivers on the landscape. Homework is set regularly, is appropriate and used well to extend pupils' understanding. This could be seen in a very good Year 9 lesson on developing and developed countries. Homework was used very well to link the previous lesson to new work through a task involving the distribution of aid to countries.

53. The leadership and management of geography are very good. There is a clear sense of purpose reflected in the departmental plan for future developments. This focuses clearly on raising pupils' attainment, and realistic targets have been set for improvement. Staff work well as a team to achieve these common aims. Geography makes a good contribution to the ethos of the college through the high expectations for work and behaviour it sets for pupils. While resources are adequate, aspects of the accommodation for the subject are unsatisfactory. One large classroom is used to teach two classes. There is no dividing wall between the classes and there are difficulties created by sound from one area of the room intruding into the other. This situation limits the methods that teachers can use; for example the noise from video-recordings would prevent teaching in the adjacent space and so material of this kind can only be used if classes can be moved elsewhere.

139. **History**

54. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment seen during the inspection was in line with national expectations. Teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 indicated that they were close to the national average. The results of teachers' assessments for 1999 were similar to those for 1998 but as yet the national average is not available for 1999 and the comparison with this figure cannot be made. This was broadly the picture at the time of the last inspection. Girls have consistently performed better than boys but the department has now developed some sound strategies to address this problem. The low levels of literacy of many pupils on entry to the college have adversely affected attainment in history in the past. Now, with higher levels of literacy in pupils joining the college in Year 7 and improvements created by the whole-college literacy programme, the department is beginning to see some improvement in attainment. Significant numbers of pupils are already using higher level skills in the evaluation of sources of evidence and in historical interpretation. Their good use of the skills of interpretation in terms of the behaviour of important historical characters such as

Henry II and in terms of the reliability of a range of evidence demonstrates an improvement in attainment since the last inspection.

55. By the end of the key stage, higher and average attainers produce detailed extended pieces of writing to answer questions or as work on specific topics. Higher attainers write well-structured essays and can develop their ideas in relevant ways, for example, on the causes of World War I. In the evaluation of sources of evidence, higher and average attainers make sensible deductions from pictures and graphs and are able to detect bias in a source. Higher attainers distinguish more clearly between the bias and reliability of sources. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs grasp the main points of the topics studied and can make simple deductions from a source of evidence. For example, they find evidence of George Stephenson's determination and perseverance.

56. Pupils at all levels of attainment are making good progress across the key stage. The pupils who are currently in Year 7, who arrived with their skills in history roughly in line with national expectations, initially made steady progress. By the end of the first term, however, they are beginning to extend their skills in observation. Thus they are starting to notice differences between sources of evidence in the form of pictures, films and writing and to make deductions about their reliability. For example, a pupil with special educational needs was able to appreciate that the written source mentioned five knights coming to murder Thomas Becket, while the picture source showed only four knights, and was able to offer a sensible suggestion as to why the sources differ.

57. Pupils in Year 8 and 9 overall have less well-developed literacy skills than those in Year 7. Even so, pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress over time. They consolidate their knowledge and understanding of key events. They develop their ability to evaluate more than one source of evidence at a time and to use more complex sources. Higher attainers improve their ability to conduct research independently for the topics they study, such as George Stephenson's contribution to the development of railways. The department places a strong emphasis on improving pupils' skills in writing extended pieces of work and in their use of historical vocabulary. As a result, pupils develop their writing skills well and learn to use terms such as 'alliance systems' more confidently. With regular practice, pupils improve their ability to make judgements about historical events. For example, higher and average attainers learn how to assess the relative importance of several causes of World War I. They are able to give their opinion about which cause they think is most important, and to offer sensible reasons for their view. Thus, they developed the view that the German Kaiser was the most important cause of World War I, because they could see that he was central to most of the other causes that they found. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs develop their understanding that an event may have several causes. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans and teachers use these well to set them clear short-term targets for improvement. These pupils make good progress.

58. Pupils have good attitudes and behave well. They are attentive in lessons, work with good application and perseverance, and collaborate well in groups and in pairs. They consistently demonstrate good working relationships with each other and the teacher. In the best lessons, such as in a Year 7 lesson on the murder of Thomas Becket, pupils respond with enthusiasm. They are keen to know what will happen next and vie with each other to ask and answer questions. Year 9 pupils work well, demonstrating independence in tackling work on a topic.

59. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory, almost all of it is good and at times it is very good. In the best lessons, such as the Year 7 work on Thomas Becket, very good learning opportunities are provided for the pupils. These are created through thorough medium-term planning and good teamwork. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide pupils with regular good quality assessments at the end of each module of work. Their constructive marking helps pupils know what their level of attainment is and how to improve it. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved in several respects. A good range of

methods and activities mean that there is an increased use of pupils working together in small groups or in pairs and less dependence on textbooks. The device of bringing together several classes of pupils for lessons in which they are taught together is used very effectively to begin topics and focus pupils' thinking. The teachers' expectations are explained clearly to pupils. They know precisely what they have to do, how they have to do the work, what will secure a good grade and what the grades mean. Pace through lessons is generally brisk and there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to complete tasks or to consolidate their understanding. Work is matched very carefully to the needs of the pupils. Teachers use appropriate mechanisms most effectively to support the development of pupils' work, for example worksheets which help them with the structure of their writing. Higher attainers are well challenged through opportunities for extended writing and research.

60. The department is very well led and managed. Teachers work well as a team and have a thoughtful approach to their work that has a good impact on the quality of teaching and learning. One aspect of the history accommodation is unsatisfactory. One large classroom is used to teach two classes. There is no dividing wall between the classes and the difficulties created by sound from one area of the room intruding into the other, restricts opportunities for group work.

146. **Information technology**

61. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the nationally expected level. By the end of the key stage, pupils can word-process with some facility and use these skills to enhance the presentation of their work. The highest attainers can do this to a high level and are able to set out pages in different styles, using text with different sizes, fonts and colours. They can incorporate pictures and use the spell- and grammar-checkers integrated into the computer application. Average-attaining pupils are able to change the layout of their text and choose fonts and sizes that match the purpose of their writing. Lower-attaining pupils can input text and change its layout appropriately. Pupils have been introduced to spreadsheets and databases but few have more than a basic understanding of these applications. Few opportunities are provided for modelling, control, data-logging or the use of the Internet or e-mail, and pupils' skills in these areas are limited.

62. Pupils' progress in information technology is unsatisfactory. During the last year the college has experienced considerable difficulty with the network installed to drive its two computer rooms and this has disrupted teaching. However, pupils' unsatisfactory progress is, in the main, due to inadequate curriculum provision. Insufficient time is allowed for teaching the subject and the overall planning of the programme is not detailed enough to ensure that pupils make systematic progress as they move through the college. In word-processing, the teacher has produced a good checklist of skills that ensures that pupils are introduced to a wide range of appropriate skills over time. In other areas of the subject this is not the case. Thus, for example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils were introduced to spreadsheets but the teaching scheme does not make clear how the skills pupils gain in this lesson will be consolidated, and when and where other more advanced skills will be developed. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons and make progress in line with their peers. In some lessons that do not demand high levels of literacy, their attainment in information technology is at times very good in comparison to other members of the class.

63. Pupils have good attitudes to information technology. They behave well in lessons and they work with application. They are capable of sustaining concentration for lengthy periods and work with increasing independence as they grow older. When they are working at computers, many are confident in exploring the application they are using and its potential. Pupils work well in small groups, they cooperate effectively and support and help each other very well. Some pupils have a good capacity for personal study and are able to present lengthy pieces of work using a range of more complex word-processing skills.

64. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, mainly good and at times very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan the activities for individual lessons well. Classroom control is good. Relationships with pupils are relaxed and friendly but it is clear that teachers' expectations for behaviour and attainment are high. Lessons are generally conducted at a good speed and resources are used effectively. Teachers monitor pupils' work carefully so that they can help and support them and, as a result, progress in lessons is usually good.

65. The curriculum provision for information technology is inadequate. Time is allowed within the modular studies programme for teaching basic skills in information technology. It is envisaged that these basic skills will then be consolidated and developed further by the use of computers in the teaching of subjects. For example, it is assumed that word-processing is developed within the provision for English and this is in fact happening. But this is not the case for other areas of information technology and other subjects of the curriculum. For example, some use is made of spreadsheets in history and in mathematics but the skills pupils need are not developed beyond a basic level. As a result, the time provided throughout the curriculum for teaching information technology does not ensure that requirements of the National Curriculum are met.

66. The leadership of information technology is unsatisfactory. The teaching scheme does not make clear how skills in each of the areas of the subject will be developed progressively. Planning across the curriculum to ensure that computers are used effectively within subjects is inadequate. Assessment processes are also unsatisfactory. Appropriate processes have been created to ensure that pupils are assessed at the end of the key stage and the results reported to parents. However, pupils are not assessed at regular intervals as they move through the college. Thus, there are no mechanisms to make clear to them what their level of achievement is or how they might improve. Moreover, there is no use of information from assessment to help teachers modify their teaching programme to ensure that attainment improves.

67. The college has sufficient computers and a good range of software. The last inspection report judged that the teaching in subjects did not effectively develop pupils' skills in using computers. To begin to address this concern the college has taken steps to ensure that many teachers have received training in a broad range of computer skills. However, a significant proportion of subject teachers still lacks sufficient training and confidence to use and apply computers in an effective and relevant way within their subject. Thus the college's two computer rooms are not used as much as they should be and this represents an inefficient use of an important and expensive resource.

153. Modern foreign languages

68. All pupils study French throughout their three years in the college. In Year 9, all pupils also study two short modules of German as part of the modular studies programme. Teachers' assessment and evidence from the inspection show that attainment in French is above average by the end of Key Stage 3. All of the key skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, are equally well developed, with no particular strengths or weaknesses. This is an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was said to be in line with and often above average although pupils' pronunciation was said to be less well developed.

69. Most pupils in Year 9 are able to understand recordings of longer passages of French spoken at normal speed and containing some past tenses. Higher-attaining pupils can understand passages that use language drawn from different topics they have studied and that contain some unfamiliar vocabulary. All can understand their teachers who speak French almost throughout lessons. Most pupils can carry out conversations using past tenses when they talk about which programmes were on television the previous evening at what time, and

what they watched. However, they do not often use French to speak to the teacher or to each other. Average and higher-attaining pupils can read and write longer passages of French related to the topics they have studied. For example, they can write at some length about what they did on holiday last year. Lower attainers can read and write sentences and short passages on these topics.

70. In German, the lessons provide a good 'taster' course, and this enables some higher attaining pupils to go on to study the language to examination level at the upper school. Pupils generally enjoy the lessons and make fast progress through some basic language in several topics.

71. The attainment of girls in French is better than that of boys to a greater extent than is the case nationally. The department has already begun to employ useful strategies to address this, including asking the boys their views of language lessons. Teachers are acting on the results of the research they have done. During the inspection it was notable that boys were as interested and as well involved in the lessons as girls, which is often not the case elsewhere. Overall, pupils' attainment is improving at a faster rate than the national average.

72. All pupils make good progress in French. Most have not studied the language before coming to Ibstock, and they reach higher than average levels of attainment by the end of their three years in the college. The course is well planned to ensure that they acquire not only a broader vocabulary as they go through the college but also a greater understanding of the grammar of the language and of how to use important structures. These pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational need have individual education plans and teachers have used these well to set them clear short-term targets for improvement. In Years 8 and 9 they enjoy and work hard in the lessons in groups of pupils of similar prior attainment. In mixed attainment classes in Year 7 they receive good support and work is well tailored to their needs.

73. Pupils have good attitudes. They show interest in lessons and maintain their concentration well. Their behaviour is very good and they show respect for each other, the teacher, and books and equipment. They work well together in pairs to practise speaking in almost every lesson. They are very willing and confident to speak French, both in pairs and in front of the class, because the atmosphere in lessons is supportive. They are learning good habits for study which will help them to make progress later. They have and use helpful booklets for each topic they study which remind them of the work of previous lessons and some important points of grammar.

74. All of the teaching in modern languages was at least satisfactory, well over half was good, and three lessons in eleven were very good. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach, and they use French or German routinely to communicate with pupils in lessons, individually or as a class. In general, the teaching methods used ensure that pupils make good progress towards high levels of attainment. There is good consolidation and practise of new language before pupils are expected to use it independently. All teachers have high expectations of pupils. On occasion, these expectations are a little too high, and some pupils find the work too difficult. The pace of lessons is good. Resources are often very good and they are almost always well used. Teachers usually provide work at different levels well matched to the attainment of pupils. For example, in one Year 9 class the teacher had prepared an extra, more demanding listening exercise to challenge the higher-attaining pupils. She used student teachers, one of whom was a native speaker of French, to record the conversation. One of the students took some of the pupils out of the lesson to complete the exercise. Meanwhile the teacher worked with the rest of the class on the reinforcement of earlier work, which the higher attainers did not need. Homework is well used to support and extend the work done in class.

75. The department is very well led and managed. Teaching schemes and policies are of very

high quality and they are well implemented in the department. The teachers work well together as a cohesive team who are committed to raising standards of attainment. Assessment of the four skills is systematic and regular, and it is effectively recorded. At the end of each unit of work, pupils assess their own progress and the teacher provides an overview of their attainment. This assessment is shared with parents who are invited to make their own comments on their children's attainment. The department uses information from assessments well to make changes in the curriculum.

161. **Music**

76. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are attaining above the national expectation with almost three-quarters of pupils working at or beyond the expected level. Year 9 pupils are able to use the elements of music to describe what they hear, and have a good vocabulary of appropriate terms. Secure rhythm and good ensemble playing mark the playing of instruments. In extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons playing is good. Composition generally is good and Year 9 pupils are able to create complex pieces which match the level required by the National Curriculum. Their Raga pieces sound authentic and the best of them have interesting rhythms and improvisation. When responding to recorded music, lower-attainers and pupils with special educational needs are given a restricted range of tasks which they are able to complete successfully. Their composition is often among the best in the class. For example, a Year 8 girl successfully shaped a beautiful melody which very neatly fitted the pattern pupils had been asked to create.

77. Pupils make good progress across the key stage by following a structured scheme of work that enables them to build on their musical skills. As pupils approach the end of the key stage very good progress can be seen as they experience more complex work. They are able to make connections between performing and listening, and as one helps the other, this enables them to achieve a deeper understanding of the nature of music. The clear guidance they are given on how they can improve performance helps pupils to know their attainment in relation to the expected levels and thus motivates them to make progress. The work provided matches the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational need have individual education plans and teachers use these well to set them clear short-term targets for improvement. These pupils make good progress and a good feature of the practical work in lessons is that it allows them to express themselves clearly.

78. There is a spirit of enthusiasm and enjoyment for music-making in lessons. Pupils' have good attitudes and their behaviour is almost always consistently good. They work well together. When asked to do so, they discuss what needs to be done in groups and allocate tasks for each other so that they can all make a valuable contribution to ensemble activities. This was particularly apparent in a Year 7 lesson. Pupils worked in groups in spaces around the music room to practise their part for a Chinese piece before coming together for a class performance. A significant number of pupils take advantage of the opportunity to learn a range of orchestral and other instruments, many of them forming the college orchestra. The choir of mostly girls are working hard for the Christmas concert when they will include a song written by four former pupils who won the award for 'Voices of Promise' last year.

79. All teaching is at least satisfactory, almost half of lessons are good and two out of seven are very good. The content of lessons captures pupils' imagination and challenges them all, enabling them to work to the best of their ability. Very good planning gives a clear focus to lessons and distinct progress can be seen throughout the key stage. Assessment takes place regularly and ensures that pupils know the level of their attainment in relation to the National Curriculum. The results of the assessment are used to give pupils very specific guidance on areas of their work that need improvement. Work in lessons is carefully prepared with the needs of all pupils in mind. More challenging activities are offered to higher attainers while lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs have material presented in a way which they can understand. Very good relationships between pupils and with the teacher are a

strong feature of all lessons. These arise from the example the teacher sets to pupils which demonstrates the importance of valuing everyone equally and respecting their views and efforts.

80.The department is well led by an experienced musician. The curriculum is planned well and offers pupils a variety of music-making opportunities, both in lessons and also in extra-curricular activities. The arrangements for instrumental teaching are very well managed and are an added dimension to the musical life of the college. The need to include more singing in the curriculum identified at the time of the last inspection has been very successfully addressed and this is evident in the high standards achieved by the choir.

166. **Physical education**

81.By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards in line with pupils of similar age nationally. In 1998 teachers' assessments showed the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels was in line with the national average. The results of teachers' assessments for 1999 were similar to those for 1998 but as yet the national average is not available for 1999 and the comparison with this figure cannot be made. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls.

82.Pupils have the skills to play a number of games, they understand the rules and apply them consistently in their play. They understand simple tactics such as the roles of attackers and defenders. A deeper understanding of tactics is limited in some lessons by the lack of opportunity for pupils to develop skills of planning, for example, in deciding how they might play and win against an opposing team. The majority of pupils can swim and by the end of the key stage many are working toward recognised awards. When given the opportunity, pupils can observe and comment on the performance of others, but this is not a consistent feature of the teaching. As a result, pupils are not always able to identify the strengths and weakness in a performance, relate this to their own work and decide what they must do to improve. Pupils throughout the college understand the need to prepare themselves for activity and the effect of exercise on the body. They cooperate well when practising skills and in team games, and work safely whether alone or in groups.

83.Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the key stage. They enter the college with a wide range of experiences and attainment in physical education. By the end of the key stage the majority have attained standards in line with those expected for their age. In lessons progress is satisfactory and occasionally good. When progress is good, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers communicate a sense of enthusiasm. This was demonstrated in a Year 7 football lesson when pupils were keen to practise maintaining possession of the ball at the beginning of the lesson and then apply these skills in their games. When progress was satisfactory, the pace of the teaching was slower and pupils did not work with such energy and enthusiasm. Over longer periods of time, pupils make satisfactory progress as they build up their skills and knowledge in a range of activities. Pupils with special educational needs are well-integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress. The progress of pupils of all levels of attainment is enhanced by the opportunities for many of them to be involved in the extensive programme of inter-form competitions for both boys and girls.

84.Pupils have good attitudes towards physical education and they behave well in lessons. Levels of participation are high, pupils enjoy the activities and are well motivated. Usually pupils organise themselves and their equipment quickly but occasionally pupils are too dependent upon the teacher to give them detailed instructions.

85. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and in half of lessons it is good. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of a range of activities in the subject and they use this to plan tasks that carefully build up pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, the teaching scheme and lessons give insufficient attention to the systematic development of pupils' skills of planning and evaluation. Teachers' organisation of pupils and equipment in lessons is good and lessons run efficiently. In the swimming pool, effective use is made of the qualified swimming instructor. Teachers use a range of methods to sustain pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, good use was made of information technology for pupils to record their personal results on a spreadsheet and produce graphs showing the effect of activity on their heart rate. Similarly, good use of a demonstration of correct arm stroke technique by pupils in a Year 7 girls' swimming lesson led to an improvement by all in the group. Occasionally the teaching is too directed and does not sufficiently involve the pupils in their own learning. Teachers support pupils as they work with helpful and encouraging comments. In the best lessons this includes a review of their work with pupils at the end of the lesson and a discussion of what they will move on to next.

86. Day-to-day management of the subject is good and is supported by good documentation. The plan showing how the department intends to develop identifies priorities for improvement and focuses appropriately on teaching and learning. However, the plan is not yet being implemented sufficiently rigorously. Teaching is not yet being monitored to ensure there is a consistency of approach and planning. Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development through group work and team games. However, the teaching scheme in dance does not give sufficient emphasis to the cultural aspects of this activity. The arrangements for the assessments of pupils' work are good and have improved since the last inspection. They are used well for the purpose of reporting to parents but have not yet been used to review the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching. The accommodation is satisfactory overall but the surface of the floor in the sports hall is unsatisfactory for the teaching of dance and gymnastics and, as a result, the curriculum, whilst meeting requirements, is heavily centred on games.

172. **Religious education**

87. Standards have improved since the time of the last inspection. In lessons and work seen, pupils' attainment is in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils at all levels of attainment demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the rituals, beliefs and practices of the four major faiths studied. At the end of the key stage, pupils can hold mature and sensible class discussions about contemporary moral issues, for example, what the age of responsibility should be, and philosophical themes such as the justification of war. In their writing, higher attainers are able to develop their arguments more fully than lower attainers are. However, at all levels of attainment pupils, including those with special educational needs, support their ideas with sensible reasons. They show some ability to use this knowledge and understanding in the discussions of contemporary issues. For example, Year 7 pupils continue work on a very good project that they begin in Year 6 prior to coming to Ibstock. This is intended to assist the transition between schools. Pupils benefit from the opportunity this provides to study the local church in some depth. They produce well-developed written work that includes interviews with local clergy and detailed descriptions and diagrams of the local church. Higher attainers produce well-presented surveys of church attendance and make sensible suggestions about what the church could do to improve the situation.

88. Progress is over time across the key stage is good. In lessons it is never less than satisfactory and in the better lessons it is good. Where progress is good, such as during the project at the start of Year 7, there are clear gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This enables them to build an increasingly coherent picture of individual religions and to understand the lessons which may be learned from them in terms of human experience. They begin to understand how what is being studied has relevance to their own lives. The time

allocated for religious education has been increased since the last inspection and this allows pupils to study topics in greater depth and to make better progress. The progress they make in developing skills in reflecting, evaluating and responding to the issues within the locally agreed syllabus is generally good. Progress is less good where the teaching is not sharply focussed on the learning pupils need to make or when the pace in lessons is not fast enough. Pupils' skills in discussion develop well over the key stage. Pupils improve their skills in writing about religion through the use of good support structures. Higher attainers begin to structure their work logically and write more extended pieces of work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers are sensitive to their needs, include these in pupils' individual education plans and then plan work that is suitable for them.

89. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They show an interest in the topics they study, answer questions, give examples from their own experience and discuss issues willingly. They listen well, are attentive during the teachers' exposition and give serious consideration to each others' views and opinions. In lessons they feel secure enough to give a personal response to many of the religious issues brought up by the discussion. When pupils are engaged in written tasks or working in groups they generally concentrate well.

90. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection. It is now always at least satisfactory and in half of lessons it is good. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and they plan their lessons well. They have good classroom control and very good relationships with pupils. Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills in reflection and evaluation through focussing on key issues, such as, "Does God exist?", and they are challenged to think for themselves. Discussion sessions are generally handled well. In the best lessons there is a good depth of discussion which often draws on the teacher's and pupils' personal experiences. Occasionally opportunities for pupils to use their initiative are missed. Written work is carefully matched to the needs of the pupils. Appropriate homework is set regularly. It is marked constructively and pupils are provided with sound advice that helps them to improve.

91. Religious education is well led and managed. The teachers work as a team and have a thoughtful approach to the needs of the subject, which has helped it to develop effectively. There have been considerable improvements since the time of the last inspection. Only two teachers are now involved in teaching the subject and they have done much to increase their subject expertise. The curriculum has been improved significantly, as have the resources available for learning and the teaching methods used. A richer diet of learning activities is now offered to the pupils. In particular, activities that require them to work in groups or in pairs are now used regularly. Opportunities are also provided for pupils to work more independently, especially through research and topic work. This enables them to engage in writing longer pieces of work. Lessons take place in a number of unsuitable non-specialist classrooms and this puts some constraints on the teaching. The college now allocates more time for teaching religious education and the curriculum closely follows the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. All of these measures have contributed the significant improvement in standards of attainment that have occurred since the last inspection

177. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

177. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

92.The inspection team consisted of 9 inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week 113 lessons, 20 registration sessions, whole college and year group assemblies and a range of extra-curricular activities were inspected. Teachers were seen teaching several times. Planned discussions were held with pupils, teachers, other members of staff and governors. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including a sample across the range of pupils' attainment from each year group. A large amount of documentation, including teachers' planning, provided by the college was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 7 parents shortly before the inspection, and analysed 249 responses to a questionnaire about their opinions, distributed by the college.

93.Inspectors spent a total of 32 inspector days in college gathering first hand evidence. They spent 94 hours observing lessons, 2 hours talking formally to pupils and 16 hours in evaluating pupils' work.

94.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

| | Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent) | Number of pupils with statements of SEN | Number of pupils on college's register of SEN | Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals |
|---------|---|---|---|---|
| Y7 – Y9 | 560 | 24 | 122 | 59 |

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y9)

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) | 31.1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 18 |

Education support staff (Y7 – Y9)

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 11 |
| Total aggregate hours worked each week | 233 |

| | |
|--|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: | 82.2 |
|--|------|

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----|------|
| Average teaching group size: | KS3 | 21.9 |
|------------------------------|-----|------|

Financial data

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Financial year: | 1998/1999 |
|-----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total Income | 1 065 955 |
| Total Expenditure | 1 016 790 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2 023 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 110 235 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 69 401 |

PARENTAL SURVEY

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out: | 560 |
| Number of questionnaires returned: | 249 |

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I feel the college encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the college | 11 | 68 | 13 | 5 | 2 |
| I would find it easy to approach the college with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) | 34 | 57 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| The college handles complaints from parents well | 21 | 56 | 21 | 2 | 0 |
| The college gives me a clear understanding of what is taught | 17 | 66 | 12 | 6 | 0 |
| The college keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress | 26 | 61 | 6 | 5 | 2 |
| The college enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work | 27 | 66 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| The college encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons | 20 | 62 | 14 | 4 | 0 |
| I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home | 19 | 63 | 7 | 10 | 2 |
| The college's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) | 21 | 65 | 10 | 2 | 1 |
| The college achieves high standards of good behaviour | 20 | 64 | 11 | 6 | 0 |
| My child(ren) like(s) college | 39 | 50 | 8 | 2 | 0 |