

INSPECTION REPORT

Queen Elizabeth's Community College

Crediton

LEA area: Devon

Unique Reference Number: 113498

Principal : Mrs V Brasington

Reporting inspector: Mr T Jardine

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th October 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of college: | Comprehensive |
| Type of control: | Community |
| Age range of students: | 11 – 18 years |
| Gender of students: | Mixed |
| College address: | Western Road CREDITON Devon EX17 3LU |
| Telephone number: | 01363 773401 |
| Fax number: | 01363 777859 |
| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr P Jones |
| Date of previous inspection: | November 1994 |

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Mr T Jardine Registered Inspector | | Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management |
| Mrs J Gallichan Lay Inspector | Equal opportunities | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and students' welfare Partnership with parents and the community |
| Mr A Lemon | Art Special educational needs | |
| Dr B Smith | Mathematics | Efficiency of the college |
| Mr P Nixon | English | Curriculum |
| Dr M Davis | Science | |
| Mr B Carvell | Information and communication technology Design and technology | Accommodation |
| Mr R Donne | Modern foreign languages | |
| Mr M Roberts | History | |
| Mr J Carnaghan | Geography | Assessment |
| Dr J Harvey | Music and drama | Staffing |
| Ms J Boulton | Physical education | |
| Mr W Greenwood | Religious education | Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |
| Mr I Hodgkinson | GNVQ and the sixth form | Learning resources |

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Ltd
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset TA8 1AN
Tel: 01278 795022

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the college does well

- Standards of attainment in almost all subjects meet or exceed national expectations
- Students' progress is good
- Students' attitudes are good, behaviour mainly good and relationships very good
- The rate of attendance is good
- The quality of teaching is consistently good
- Social development is very good and moral and cultural development is good
- The arrangements for the personal development of students is good
- The curriculum is broad and relevant
- The support, guidance and arrangements for students' welfare are good
- Partnership with parents and the community are very good
- Leadership and management are good
- Resources are well used and finances very well controlled
- Provides good value for money

Where the college has weaknesses

- Boys' results in some subjects are significantly less good than girls'
- Attainment and progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory throughout the college
- Lack of concentration and noisy behaviour by a minority of students at Key Stage 3
- Information from assessment and marking is insufficiently used to inform curriculum planning
- Inadequacy of learning resources impede the effective delivery of the curriculum
- The split site and shortcomings in the accommodation affect the delivery of the curriculum
- Weaknesses in the organisation of the timetable

The strengths of the college far outweigh the weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students at the college.

How the college has improved since the last inspection

The college has improved in many respects since the last inspection in November 1994. The quality of teaching has improved: the proportion of teaching which is at least satisfactory has increased from 80 per cent to 95 per cent and the proportion of teaching that is at least good from 40 per cent to 72 per cent. GCSE results are still above the national average due to the increased performance of girls, however boys' results have declined slightly. GCE A-level results have improved greatly. Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues referring to the development of a clear and shared understanding of the college's aims and ethos, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and developments and reviewing the time allocated to teaching. Progress has been made in providing a coherent college development plan that is linked to the current college budget but less good progress has been made with longer-term planning. The statutory requirements concerning registration and sex education are now met but those concerning collective worship and the provision of religious education at Key Stage 3 and post-16 are not met. This is a good college that has the capacity to sustain its improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14-, 16- and 18-year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

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

The results in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests were below the national average in English and average for mathematics and science. The results compared to similar schools, those with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, were well below average for all three subjects. This suggests that progress was unsatisfactory. However, standardised tests taken early in Year 7, show attainment on entry to be average and it remains so at the end of Key Stage 3, hence progress was satisfactory. In 1999, the results in all three subjects were far higher.

The strongest subjects at GCSE are science and German; history and art and design are consistently the weakest subjects. At GCSE above average students made particularly good progress and those of average and below average ability only average progress. The GCSE examination grade is based on the average points score per student: the college policy to enter students normally for no more than nine subjects at GCSE reduces the average GCSE points score compared with similar schools, many of whom enter students for ten or more subjects.

At A-level in 1998, the results compare favourably with students' GCSE performance. Results for vocational subjects at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are good. Over three-quarter of sixth-form leavers went on to higher education, a far higher proportion than at the time of the last inspection.

At the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form current students' attainment in the majority of subjects is above national expectations. It is only below them in information and communication technology.

Quality of teaching

| Teaching in: | Overall quality | Most effective in: | Least effective in: |
|---------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Years 7 - 9 | Good | Science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography | Information and communication technology |
| Years 10 - 11 | Good | Music, history, religious education, vocational subjects | Information and communication technology |
| Sixth form | Very good | Mathematics, science, music, history, religious education, vocational subjects | Information and communication technology |
| English | Good | | |
| Mathematics | Good | | |

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of classes; in 35 per cent of classes it was at least very good and occasionally excellent. The less than satisfactory classes were mainly at Key Stage 3. The unsatisfactory teaching in information and communication technology is due to the ineffective teaching of the subject through other subjects of the curriculum and insufficient access to computers.

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 | Mainly good but lack of concentration and noisy behaviour by a small minority of students at Key Stage 3 affects some classes and the ethos of the lower school site |
| Attendance | Good: less authorised absence than usual |
| Ethos* | Good: climate conducive to learning on the upper school site, less so on the lower school site, positive attitudes to learning, very good relationships, commitment to raising standards |
| Leadership and management | Good leadership and management at all levels, common sense of purpose to improve the college |
| Curriculum | The curriculum has been usefully revised but some problems of implementation remain. Assessment is satisfactory but information arising from assessment is insufficiently used to plan the curriculum |
| Students with special educational needs | Good provision: students make good progress throughout the college, they have access to a broad curriculum, are accurately identified and assessed and regularly reviewed |
| Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development | Social development very good, moral and cultural development good, spiritual development satisfactory |
| Staffing, resources and accommodation | Sufficient teachers and support staff, professional development systems are not fully effective, inadequacies of learning resources affect the effective delivery of the curriculum, adverse effects of the split site are pervasive, quality of accommodation varies widely |
| Value for money | Good: attainment mainly above average, good progress, good behaviour, good quality education and above average expenditure |

* 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 |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students like college ▪ It is easy to approach the college about problems or suggestions ▪ It enables students to achieve a good standard of work ▪ It encourages students to get involved in extra-curricular activities ▪ Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the college ▪ It keeps parents well informed about students' progress ▪ The values and attitudes promoted have a positive effect on students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The quality and quantity of homework ▪ Information for parents on students' progress and what is taught ▪ The organisation of parents' evenings ▪ Mixed ability teaching and misbehaviour hold back the higher attaining in Years 7 and 8 ▪ Shortage of textbooks |

The inspectors' judgements support the parents' positive views of the college. Parents are adequately informed about students' progress through annual written reports and by termly reports on students' effort. Further information on students' progress is available from their tutor.

Appropriate homework is regularly set in most subjects. The timing of parents' meetings is rather early for working parents. Progress in a few classes in Years 7 and 8 is held back by lack of concentration and noisy behaviour of a minority of boys or the failure to provide work that matches the differing abilities of the students. Inadequacies of learning resources such as textbooks and computers affect the effective delivery of the curriculum.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to further improve the college: governors, principal, senior management team and staff should:

- Raise the attainment of boys in those subjects where it is significantly less good than that of girls'. (*Paragraphs: 10, 13, 14, 111, 113, 141, 151, 152, 206*)
- Meet the statutory requirement to provide appropriate information and communication technology across the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 by providing better access to computer equipment and appropriate training for teachers. (*Paragraphs: 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 159*)
- Improve the level of concentration and reduce the noisy behaviour of a minority of students in Key Stage 3 by better classroom management and the creation of an appropriate learning environment. (*Paragraphs: 17, 23, 25, 38, 39, 121, 145, 157, 185*)
- Make better use of the information derived from assessment and marking to inform curriculum planning and help students improve their work. (*Paragraphs: 54, 120, 147*)
- Improve the quantity and quality of learning resources in those subjects where they affect the effective delivery of the curriculum. (*Paragraphs: 102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 124, 128, 133, 139, 149, 171, 187, 195, 205*)

In addition to the key issues above the following less important weaknesses should be considered for incorporation in the action plan:

- Address the statutory requirements to provide:
 - a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form. (*Paragraphs: 59, 148*)
- Address the weaknesses in the organisation of the timetable. (*Paragraphs: 45, 47, 108, 211*)
- Improve the standard of accommodation for those subjects where it impedes the effective delivery of the curriculum. (*Paragraphs: 99, 101, 124, 133, 146, 149, 171, 211*)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the college

1. Queen Elizabeth's Community College is a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive college with 1527 students on roll, 805 boys and 725 girls. The college is LEA controlled. It is situated in Crediton, Devon.
2. The majority of students are drawn from 18 primary schools in mid-Devon. Since the last inspection, in November 1994, student numbers have risen by over ten per cent and the majority of students are now boys (52.5 per cent). Standardised tests, taken on entry to the college show that the average level of attainment is close to the national average. The proportion of students of very high ability is below the national average. The proportion of students speaking English as an additional language (0.5 per cent) is well below average. There are very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds.
3. Most students come from families whose socio-economic circumstances are above average. The percentage of students with special educational needs is close to the national average but the percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is well above the national average due to the presence of 28 students in the support centre.
4. In 1998, the proportion of Year 11 students staying on in full-time education (68 per cent) was lower than at the last inspection but the proportion who entered training made up for the shortfall. The proportion of Year 13 students who progressed to higher education (80 per cent) has increased significantly.
5. The guiding principle of the college is that all students are of equal worth. The college aims emphasise education for life, a broad and balanced curriculum, the encouragement of high achievement, the creation of a caring environment and the promotion of the unique value of the individual.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3

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

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1998 | 136 | 111 | 247 |

| National Curriculum Test Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of students at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 65 | 88 | 73 |
| | Girls | 77 | 67 | 60 |
| | Total | 142 | 155 | 133 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | College | 57 | 64 | 54 |
| | National | 65 | 60 | 56 |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | College | 23 | 38 | 24 |
| | National | 35 | 36 | 27 |

| Teacher Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of students at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 70 | 92 | 90 |
| | Girls | 79 | 77 | 83 |
| | Total | 149 | 169 | 173 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | College | 60 | 67 | 71 |
| | National | 62 | 64 | 62 |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | College | 22 | 29 | 42 |
| | National | 31 | 37 | 31 |

Attainment at Key Stage 4

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1998 | 134 | 121 | 255 |

| GCSE Results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A* to G | 1 or more grades A* to G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of students achieving standard specified | Boys | 55 | 117 | 128 |
| | Girls | 73 | 112 | 116 |
| | Total | 128 | 229 | 244 |
| Percentage achieving standard specified | College | 50 | 90 | 96 |
| | National | 44.6 | 89.8 | 95.2 |

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of such students who achieved all those they studied:

| | Number | % Success rate |
|----------|--------|----------------|
| College | 39 | 74 |
| National | | n/a |

Attainment in the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16-18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

| Year | Male | Female | Total |
|------|------|--------|-------|
| 1998 | 34 | 47 | 81 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent | | |
|---|---|--------|------|--|--------|------|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| College | 19.3 | 24.5 | 22 | 3.0 | 2.83 | 2.86 |
| National | - | - | 17.6 | - | - | 2.8 |

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications:

| | Number | % Success Rate |
|----------|--------|----------------|
| College | 84 | 77 |
| National | | - |

Attendance

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

| | | % |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Authorised Absence | College | 7.4 |
| | National comparative data | 7.9 |
| Unauthorised Absence | College | 0.6 |
| | National comparative data | 1.1 |

Exclusions

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

| | Number |
|--------------|--------|
| Fixed period | 27 |
| Permanent | 3 |

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

| | % |
|------------------------|----|
| Very good or better | 35 |
| Satisfactory or better | 95 |
| Less than satisfactory | 5 |

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE COLLEGE

Attainment and progress

6. At the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of attainment is average, at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form it is above average.
7. Attainment on entry includes the full range of ability but the proportion of most able students is somewhat below average and the proportion of well below average students is above average.
8. Attainment was judged to be at least in line with national expectations in eight out of ten lessons. Attainment was above national expectations in four out of ten lessons and well above in one out of eight of them. The proportion of students attaining above national expectations increased from Key Stage 3, through Key Stage 4 to the sixth form. The overall level of attainment in subjects is almost equally divided between average or above average. The exceptions are geography which is well above average and information and communications technology which is below average.
9. The performance of students in the standardised tests taken in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 were below the national average for English and close to the national average in mathematics and science. Taking the results for all three subjects for the period 1996 to 1998 together, the results were close to the national average. Girls significantly outperformed boys in English but their results in mathematics and science were similar. In comparison with similar schools, students' performance in the 1998 tests was well below average for all three subjects. Results in 1999 were substantially higher in all three subjects.
10. In 1998 at Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE or their equivalent was 52.9 per cent, above the national average of 44.6 per cent and the 49 per cent obtained at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of students obtaining five or more grades A*-G grades was 89.8 per cent in line with the national average of 89.6 per cent. The proportion of students obtaining five or more grades A*-C and five or more grades A*-G over the period 1996 to 1998 was above the national average. The average GCSE points score per student was above the national average in 1998 and average compared to similar schools. In the period 1996 to 1998 the average points score per student rose due to the improved performance of girls but at a slower rate than the national average due to the slight decline in boys' results. In 1998, based on their average points score, boys' results were close to their national average but girls' results were above their national average. The points gap between boys and girls was well above average in 1998. Over the period 1996 to 1998 both boys' and girls' results were above their national averages.
11. In the sixth form, the average points score of students entered for two or more A-level subjects in 1998 was 22, well above the national average of 17.6 and very high compared to the 14.6 points at the last inspection. During the period 1996 to 1998, the average A-level points score of such students was above the national average. The average points score of students entered for fewer than two A-levels was 3.2, above the national average of 2.8. GNVQ results were above the national average.
12. At the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of students with special educational needs in literacy is well below national expectations in reading and writing but is in line or even above them in other areas of learning. The attainment of students with other special needs is generally below national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of most students in the support centre is average. For example, in 1999 the majority of students obtained five or more GCSE subjects at grades A*-G including English, and a minority

obtained grades A*-C in art and physical education and bronze and silver grades in the Youth Award scheme. In the sixth form, two students passed A-levels in 1998; one obtained four subjects at A and B grades.

13. Current attainment in English is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 but above them in mathematics and science. At Key Stage 4 attainment in English remains in line with national expectations but is above them in science and mathematics. In the sixth form attainment in English and mathematics is above national expectations but is well above them in science. The results of the 1998 Key Stage 3 Standard Attainment Tests was below average for English and average for mathematics and science. The proportion of students who obtained grades A*-C in the 1998 GCSE results was average in English but above average in mathematics and science. Girls outperformed boys significantly in English but their results were similar in mathematics and science. In 1998 at A-level pass rates were average in mathematics and above average in science and English and the proportion of A and B grades was high for almost all subjects.
14. Attainment in most other subjects is in line with national expectations. The exceptions that are well above national expectations are: geography at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and history at Key Stage 4. The exceptions that are above national expectations are: modern foreign languages, physical education and geography at Key Stage 3; design and technology, physical education, religious education and vocational subjects at Key Stage 4; and physical education, religious education and vocational subjects in the sixth form. The only subjects which are below national expectations are information and communications technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form and music at Key Stage 3. Girls outperform boys in English, art and the humanities but there is no significant difference in mathematics, science, design and technology, vocational subjects and modern foreign languages.
15. GCSE results for other subjects in 1998 were mainly above or well above the national average for the proportion of A*-C grades. The only subject that was below average was art. At A-level the overall pass rate and the proportion of A and B grades were above the national average.
16. Attainment in vocational subjects at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in 1998 was above average.
17. Overall progress is good both by mainstream students and by those with special educational needs. It is consistently good during Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Such good progress is due to the positive attitudes of students towards their studies, the largely good behaviour and the consistently good teaching. Isolated examples of unsatisfactory or occasionally poor progress occurs mainly at Key Stage 3 where a contributory factor is immature behaviour by a small minority of boys. Progress is at least satisfactory in over nine out of ten lessons. It is at least good in almost seven out of ten lessons and very good in three out of ten lessons. The rate of progress is best in the sixth form, slightly less good during Key Stage 4 and least good during Key Stage 3.
18. Progress is good during Key Stage 3, apart from English, design and technology, physical education and art where it is satisfactory, music where it is unsatisfactory and information communication technology where it is poor. During Key Stage 4 progress is mainly good apart from history and geography where it is very good, design and technology, physical education and music where it is satisfactory and information and communication technology where it is poor. In the sixth form progress is mainly good apart from history where it is excellent, mathematics and science where it is very good and information and communication technology where it is poor.
19. Unsatisfactory progress in music at Key Stage 3 is due to the shortage of time that does not enable students to consolidate learning. The poor progress in information and communication technology is due to the lack of access to equipment and software and ineffective teaching across the curriculum.

20. Students with special educational needs in the support centre and in the learning support department make good progress at all key stages. In the extraction lessons students are progressing well because they have developed considerable confidence in tackling their learning needs. For example, they are open and honest when discussing what they find most difficult in lessons and are self-assured in managing these. However, extraction interrupts the continuity of work in the subjects from which students are withdrawn. The large majority of students make good gains in reading skills and improve the quality of their writing. A very good range of computerised equipment is employed, particularly in the support centre, where voice activated programmes are used to develop literacy skills very effectively. Students make good progress in learning to operate information technology equipment. Teaching is planned well in the majority of extraction lessons, students' individual needs are well addressed and work is set based on a careful analysis of the students' progress. Occasionally the rate of students' progress is unsatisfactory during extraction lessons in the learning support department; in one case the teacher could not gain easy access to a classroom and did not know where essential resources were stored. The room used is too small for the seven Year 9 students. The rate of progress of some students with special educational needs is too slow in some mainstream classes where there is insufficient support for the number of such students present.
21. Apart from English, other subjects also contribute to the development of language. In religious education, students are keen to read aloud which they do with feeling and accuracy. In history, students are expected to read a great deal and reading aloud is fostered. A-level history students learn how to use advanced texts, handle data from primary and secondary sources and make critical judgements. Writing is well used in geography to improve subject-specific vocabulary and to learn how to answer written questions. There is substantial writing in history with very high standards expected in the sixth form. Technical writing is well-developed in design and technology. In music students have to write words and music to songs. In religious education, literacy skills are not as well developed as oral or thinking skills; greater attention needs to be paid to written responses at Key Stage 3 and in particular the provision of opportunities for extended writing. Marking in several subjects does not pick up elementary errors of grammar and spelling. In most subjects students speak and listen well and are keen to join in oral work. Speaking and listening are well developed by the teaching techniques used in religious education. In vocational subjects, students make presentations to local businesses. In science, students speak well and frequently give an extended response to questions. Immature behaviour by boys can undermine oral work in classes where they are not firmly controlled.
22. Apart from mathematics, numeracy is developed in a number of subjects. Calculating skills are well-developed in science especially in Year 9 and above. Geography offers plenty of opportunities to develop numeracy at all levels, notably data handling and analysis. Design and technology requires working to scale, measuring, producing patterns, explaining graphs and using proportion. Vocational subjects involve data interpretation exercises.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

23. Students have good attitudes to learning. During lessons students are well motivated and interested in their studies, particularly when the teaching is lively and enthusiastic. The majority sustain concentration, listen to their teachers attentively and join in class discussions confidently. They settle down to written tasks when asked to do so and are trusted to work without direct supervision, for example when working in the library. On a few occasions there is a lack of interest, resulting in general apathy or chatter unconnected with work: this is usually in response to slowly paced lessons. Students steadily develop their capacity for personal research and study. Most arrive at lessons with the correct books ready to work. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes and take responsibility for their own studies in a mature manner.

24. The majority of students with special educational needs have positive attitudes and are interested in learning. They value the support they are given and persevere when work is difficult. Students organise themselves effectively to complete homework assignments. In a Year 9 extraction lesson in the learning support department, for example, students were highly motivated and took a close interest in each other's work. One was pleased to help another by listing the murder victims of Richard III for him. In Key Stage 4 students involved in the Youth Ward Scheme respond very well to the challenges to take responsibility for their own learning such as time management and taking charge of recording their assignments as prescribed in the course.
25. Behaviour is good overall and this has a positive impact on students' attainment and progress. In the upper school behaviour is good and often very good in lessons. Students' response was less than satisfactory in nine per cent of lessons, a total of 19 lessons, 15 of them at Key Stage 3. The most common examples of unsatisfactory response were lack of concentration, a reluctance to settle down to work, talking over the teacher or extraneous chatter whilst they were meant to be studying, calling out answers rather than putting up a hand before speaking and occasionally walking about. Such low-level indiscipline reduces the pace of learning of those involved and the rest of the class. Such behaviour confirms a concern expressed by some parents. At this early stage of the term movement around the lower school site is hectic and students can get over-excited. Movement around the upper school site is more orderly. There is a calm atmosphere, which is conducive to learning. Behaviour in assemblies is very good and students pay attention well. Students handle equipment and resources with care. At the time of the last inspection behaviour was reported as being good: this standard has been maintained.
26. There have been 27 fixed-term and three permanent exclusions over the last year which is average. The college works hard with students who have behaviour difficulties and 'time out' is used effectively to ensure poor behaviour does not effect the learning of others. Students report that bullying is not a problem and if it does occur it is dealt with promptly.
27. Relationships between students and students and staff are very good. Where possible tutors remain with the same tutor group from Year 7 to Year 11 this forges very strong relationships. Students are polite and courteous to visitors. Throughout the college they work co-operatively in pairs and small groups, in mixed and single gender groups. For example, in physical education where students were willing to demonstrate their work to others. Students listen to others during discussions and appreciate others' views and opinions.
28. Students' personal development is good and they respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility. They assist in the library, undertake reception duty and act as guides for parents' meetings or for visitors. The year and college councils provide a very good opportunity for students to be involved in decisions affecting their time at the college. They are keen to represent their tutor groups and make thoughtful and worthwhile contributions to meetings. Year 11 students take responsibility for producing a yearbook. Students in the sixth form volunteer as peer educators for the 'A Pause' sex education and anti-bullying programmes. They work with and support adults with learning difficulties thereby demonstrating their level of maturity and commitment to contributing to life in the wider community. Students respond to the plight of others in their efforts to raise money for a number of charities.

Attendance

29. Attendance at 92 per cent is good being above the national average. Unauthorised absence remains low. Punctuality to lessons throughout the day is good overall bearing in mind the dispersed nature of the site of the upper school. Most students arrive at registration in good time. Lateness is sometimes caused by the late arrival of buses.
30. The regular attendance and good punctuality to lessons of the vast majority of students makes a positive contribution to students' attainment and progress.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

31. The standard of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. It is at least satisfactory in almost all lessons and good or better in almost three-quarters of lessons. The teaching in over a third of the lessons inspected was very good or occasionally excellent. Only 12 examples of less than satisfactory teaching were seen, mainly at Key Stage 3, out of the 220 lessons inspected.
32. Most subject teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is at least good but there are some exceptions. At Key Stage 3 teaching in English, physical education, music, art and religious education is only satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, teaching in physical education is satisfactory. In the sixth form most teaching is at least very good. The exceptions are English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and art, which are good.
33. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good in the large majority of lessons. Teaching is also good in most extraction lessons provided by the support centre and the learning support department. There is good liaison between subject departments, teachers and special educational needs teachers. This helps teachers plan for students with special educational needs and in some departments has led to the production of appropriate learning materials. Teachers have students' individual education plans, which give a helpful description of the student's special educational needs, but the targets set are often too general to inform lesson planning. The deployment of support teachers and learning support assistants helps students make progress. However there are groups with a high proportion of students with special educational needs that are insufficiently supported by additional staff and where the class teacher does not provide materials matched to the needs of such students.
34. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers' expertise and knowledge motivates students to read widely in A-level history. Knowledge of the world of work enables teachers of vocational subjects to present the subject in a relevant way that captures students' interest. Teachers of art have a broad knowledge of the various aspects of the subject. At Key Stage 3 one teachers' knowledge of religious education is insecure. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology varies from excellent to those who are unable to use it to help teach their subject.
35. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. High expectations make English lessons interesting and challenging. In science students are expected to apply theoretical concepts to industrial processes which extends their learning. In geography essay writing is developed early in Year 12 in order that it can be used to promote learning throughout the course. Progress is held back in lessons with low expectations of behaviour or lack of challenge.
36. The standard of lesson planning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Clear aims and objectives helps students learn in mathematics. There has been an improvement in the extent to which work is provided to match the differing abilities of students since the last inspection. However, more could be done to match the task to students' abilities in English and for the more able in mathematics. In science schemes of work are regularly reviewed and students understand the aims of lessons. Lack of clarity of learning objectives in some art lessons at Key Stage 3 causes a mismatch between the teaching method, the choice of materials and the intended outcome.
37. The teaching methods used and the organisation of classes is good throughout the college. Well organised materials and varied tasks are used in modern foreign languages

to ensure all the different language skills are fully covered. Music teaching is responsive to students' needs and makes particularly good use of focused questioning to promote learning. In history skilful use of humour and clear explanations are used to stimulate discussion that challenges students to think. Students' concentration flags towards the end of triple periods in design and technology that consist only of practical activities.

38. The management of students is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. In science, good discipline promotes good behaviour that enables progress to be made. An encouraging atmosphere increases the confidence of Youth Award students and helps them to attain high standards. In music, students' concentration is not allowed to drift and lazy students are reprimanded. Poor classroom management is often a factor in the less than satisfactory teaching seen and is evident in those classes where noisy behaviour and lack of concentration are not effectively addressed.
39. Time and resources are well used at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very well used in the sixth form. In art, time is well used in long lessons and the pace is productive. Time targets are used in history to ensure the pace of learning is maintained. Information and communication technology is insufficiently used in general but it is well used in some subjects, for example, science, design and technology and mathematics. Slow pace is a factor in some of the less than satisfactory lessons seen and contributes to the unsatisfactory response by students in some classes.
40. The quality of day-to-day assessment is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In vocational subjects marking is mostly thorough and feedback clear and comprehensive. In music, marking is helpful and very detailed for A-level students. In science, marking gives insufficient guidance and spelling errors remain uncorrected. In mathematics, routine marking is variable, the best is very good but some gives little guide to students on how to improve and tolerates poor standards of presentation.
41. The use of homework is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In English it is regularly and usefully set. In art, homework is relevant and is used to promote research skills. In mathematics the regularity varies and the relevance is insufficient to reinforce work in lessons.

The curriculum and assessment

42. The college aims commendably include specific reference to the curriculum: 'to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which actively encourages a spirit of enquiry, curiosity, openness and enjoyment of learning.' Following the inspection in 1994 the governors and staff conducted a widespread review of the curriculum, resulting in substantial changes to courses, the timetable and organisation. Valuable curriculum and grouping policies were produced. The curriculum committee of the governing body takes a close interest in the work of the college, and governors inform themselves by visits to lessons and other activities.
43. In order to accommodate the curriculum more easily and in view of the two sites, the timetable is now composed of a two-week cycle, each week having 32 lessons of around 47 minutes each, providing teaching time of over 25 hours per week. This total is larger than that criticised in 1994 and meets DfEE recommendations for Key Stages 3 and 4.
44. At Key Stage 3 all students undertake the ten subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and moral education. Within this broad curriculum technology subjects are provided by means of rotational modules, humanities in Year 7 are integrated, and personal, social and moral education is provided through tutorial time and by a selection of 'suspended' lessons up to ten times a year. Longer periods of personal, social and moral education are provided in the summer term. The course includes health and sex education (taught in science and physical education) which is well organised and taught.

45. These arrangements are broadly satisfactory, but the provision of information and communication technology through other subjects lacks continuity and co-ordination. The extraction of students with special educational needs from English and modern foreign language lessons is supportive but breaks the continuity of their learning.
46. At Key Stage 4 all students continue to follow the National Curriculum through GCSE or Certificate of Achievement courses in English, mathematics, science (double or single award), modern foreign languages, technology, a humanities subject and an expressive arts subject. Some students may additionally take the Youth Award or a GNVQ course in business or health and social care. All continue to learn religious education and personal, social and moral education, which now includes careers education. Optional GCSE courses include business studies, media studies, physical education and RSA office studies.
47. This is a commendable range of courses, ensuring a broad programme for the full range of students. The enrichment courses however restrict the time available for the foundation curriculum, and the practicalities of timetabling incur difficulties, partly because of the split site: some teaching groups are taught by two or even three teachers, disrupting continuity; the uneven distribution of lessons across the two weeks inhibits progress in those subjects such as physical education and modern foreign languages that rely on frequent reinforcement of learning. Double lessons are not always suitable. Further review of these aspects therefore is desirable.
48. In the sixth form, most students undertake two or three A-level courses, chosen from a very wide range of over twenty subjects, including psychology, sociology and economics. A positive feature is the range of GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in business, health and social care and leisure and tourism. These can be combined with A-level courses. The Youth Award provided in Year 12 is a particularly valuable provision for the students concerned. Additionally, students can add enrichment courses to their programme, and continue to take personal, social and moral education in their tutorial lessons. Religious education, criticised in the last inspection report for its omission, is to some extent covered but still does not wholly meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
49. Extra-curricular activities throughout the college complement timetabled courses: they consist of a wide range of activities including sporting, music and creative writing that extend the timetabled curriculum. This is a good provision, offering equality of access and opportunity. In alternate years students take part in activities week, which enables them to broaden their horizons even further.
50. All students with special educational needs receive a broad and relevant curriculum. Their access to the curriculum is much improved by the support they receive in extraction lessons as these successfully develop students' literacy skills. Students with severe difficulties in literacy are extracted from all of their English, French or German lessons and consequently there is some loss of balance to the curriculum. Those students who make sufficient progress in literacy re-join mainstream English lessons. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form there is a good range of accredited courses for special educational needs students including GCSE, A-level, vocational courses and the Youth Award scheme.
51. The college undertakes assessment regularly and meets current statutory requirements. The assessment policy has not been fully implemented. Central records of students' academic development are kept but they are rarely fed through to classroom teachers. Students are regularly assessed to check their level of aptitude; some subjects also carefully assess what students know, understand and can do. There is particularly good practice in vocational education, where students receive clear feedback on their standards of work and what they should do to improve. Most departments keep records of students' progress. At Key Stage 3 subjects undertaking assessments against level descriptors provide indications of attainment. Some departments hold portfolios to exemplify standards of students' work but this is inconsistent, sometimes giving rise to inaccurate assessment

There are inaccuracies in teacher assessment in science, design and technology and information technology, although improvements have recently been made in science.

52. The procedures in place for the identification and assessment of students with special educational needs are good. Close contacts are maintained with primary schools and relevant information is transferred. Students' literacy and numeracy are assessed using standardised tests. The results of tests are used to determine the level of support and for planning teaching in extraction lessons. Students' individual education plans are reviewed regularly and annual reviews are held on all students with statements of special educational needs.
53. There are variations in the quality of marking; in subjects like English and geography marking is regular, thorough and tells students how to improve their work. However, low expectations of students are evident in the marking of mathematics. Thus, marking shows inconsistencies; the college marking policy permits variations in methodology between departments but marking is not monitored centrally, so that students have to learn to interpret a range of practices.
54. The college is producing a great deal of assessment data, including baseline assessment, but it is insufficiently used to inform planning in spite of encouragement by the governing body so to do. The data from whole-college testing - which are held centrally - are not always used by teachers to inform curriculum planning or classroom practice. However, the college does use the results of assessed tasks as the basis for information provided for the heads of Years 10 and 11. The college has a good system for setting individual targets for students but its effect on their progress is variable. In a few subjects assessment is used to assist development; in history progress is carefully monitored to determine under-achievement and set realistic targets. Targets appear on college reports but students are rarely able to remember them. There is little data on the 'value added' by departments.
55. The issues raised in the last inspection have not been addressed fully. Marking and assessment still lacks consistency between subjects. Primary school assessments are now effectively passed to departments but their use remains variable.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

56. Through its statement of aims and attendant commentary contained in the prospectus, the college has declared a public commitment to the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Since the previous inspection, the strategy of including the college community, particularly students, in the formulation and dissemination of the aims has proved successful in terms of creating understanding and ownership.
57. There is a focus upon positive values and responsible attitudes; parents express satisfaction with the values the college promotes; strong support is provided by the governing body and adults generally set a good example and provide good role models. The college is working hard to establish an ethos where tolerance and respect flourish within a strong moral framework, and to provide a safe and secure environment within which students can develop both personally and academically; it has been more successful in establishing such an ethos in the upper school than in the lower.
58. Students' spiritual development overall is satisfactory; religious education and geography make powerful contributions. Teaching in religious education, with an emphasis upon Christianity, also provides insights into other world faiths – Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism and Hinduism; the work related to ethics, morals and philosophy requires students to reflect upon themselves and their relationship to the unknown. This ethos, within which students are required to act as thinking human beings, has an effect, which extends beyond the boundaries of the subject into whole-college provision. A 'Connect' club, sponsored by the local faith communities meets weekly and provides extra-curricular opportunities for students to reflect upon the relevance of Christian teaching to the

challenges facing modern society. Contributions to students' spiritual development are made by a range of other subjects – design and technology, music and the expressive arts, personal and social education, art, history, English, vocational education – but many opportunities are missed. A co-ordinated whole-college approach, with particular emphasis at post-16, could give added significance to the spiritual dimension.

59. Students have the opportunity to meet in an assembly on one occasion each week; the focus upon the spiritual dimension is inconsistent and some of the venues detract from the quality of the experience. The college as at the last inspection does not meet the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of corporate worship.
60. Provision for moral education is good; the college, through its daily practices and routines promotes values vigorously. It encourages students to develop a care and respect for themselves, for others and for property, self evident in the upper school but less so in the lower school. Students know right from wrong. In their daily contact staff generally play an effective part in implementing the college's moral codes and expectations. Subjects from across the whole of the curriculum effectively address a range of moral themes and issues. Sex education, provided through the 'A Pause' project, enables all students throughout the college to engage with moral issues, including personal responsibilities, within the context of family relationships. The use of sixth-form students, acting as mentors to younger students has taken the college forward significantly from the previous inspection. Charitable activities and support for a wide range of external bodies – the Cot Death Society, Oxfam, Tear Fund, The Third World First – is a strong feature of the college, with many initiated/identified by the students themselves.
61. The college makes very good provision for students' social development; they are trusted by adults and generally respond positively. Tolerance and respect for other people, their views, beliefs, ideas and feelings are integral to the college's work; classroom practice, exemplified by co-operative work in pairs and small groups is a feature of the whole curriculum provision. Links with the business community, extended through the introduction of GNVQ courses, local faith communities and Exeter University, together with an impressive range of both sporting and non-sporting activities, bring many students into useful contact with outside bodies and the world of work. Citizenship is an integral part of the curriculum; an audit of current provision is being undertaken to identify areas for development relative to proposed future requirements. A range of features, such as the year and college councils, the mentoring scheme to support sex education and the anti-bullying strategy along with the visits to external bodies, enable students to practice and display their social competencies.
62. Provision for students' cultural development is good overall, promoted throughout an extensive range of curricular and extra-curricular activities; English, modern foreign languages, religious education, science and history all make valuable contributions. A wide range of visits both at home, - to places of work, worship, the theatre, concerts, art galleries, - and abroad, extend students' cultural awareness, locally, nationally and internationally. The college's boarding facilities are used to accommodate foreign students on exchange visits. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the development of an understanding of life within a British multi-ethnic society; it is well supported by history and modern foreign languages. There is a need to provide a richer, more extensive set of experiences which will enable students to recognise and comprehend the challenges which living in a multi-ethnic society bring to the local community.

Support, guidance and students' welfare

63. The college makes good provision for the support, guidance and welfare of students and this has a positive impact on attainment and progress. Teachers offer friendly support to students so creating a caring atmosphere in which students can learn effectively. The well-planned induction programme ensures students enter the college confidently. Students

meet members of the college staff whilst still at their primary schools. They are grouped sensitively to ensure they settle quickly.

64. The personal and social education programme is developing and the use of tutorial time has improved since the time of the last inspection. The use of the weekly tutorial session, where time is limited, is variable. Tutors do receive guidance on what might be covered. However, students in different tutor groups are likely to receive very different experiences. Much work has been carried out to audit provision across the curriculum to improve consistency. The suspended timetable sessions, which take place ten times a year, are devoted to specific topics such as induction, drugs awareness and decision-making. Year teams meet and plan these sessions carefully and they are designed to meet the needs of the students as they move through the college. Careers education is secure within the personal and social education provision. Time is identified clearly and matched to the needs of students at major decision times. The careers library is well organised and students are encouraged to seek individual advice if required. All students in Year 10 and Year 12 undertake a period of work experience. This is organised carefully to provide a worthwhile experience for students. The quality and impact of careers education is now being monitored more formally. The provision for careers education is very good. Good arrangements for transportation home have been made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular activities after college.
65. The college's provision for sex education is very good. The 'A Pause' programme is taught as part of the physical education curriculum. This programme has been developed over the years and involves outside contributors from the 'A Pause' project team and sixth-form peer educators. Sessions observed were well taught and involved students thoroughly in their own learning. There were lively discussions and open, frank explanations by teachers.
66. Tutors and heads of year play a key role in monitoring students' progress, behaviour and attendance. The monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory. Improvements have been made in the sharing of information between subject teachers and tutors. Students experiencing difficulties and those with special educational needs are identified and offered additional support and guidance through individual programmes. Tutors and year heads know their students well, relationships are very good, and this helps them to meet students' individual needs. Mentors are available to support Year 11 students as they prepare for their GCSE examinations, if they wish.
67. Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance are good and the college has worked hard to implement a system which is not too time-consuming and yet overcomes the difficulties of the split-site. Year staff and the education welfare officer work together effectively to identify and support students with poor attendance records. This year's manual registers are maintained neatly and marked to identify types of absence clearly. Statutory requirements for recording and reporting attendance are met.
68. There are clear procedures in place to promote discipline and good behaviour. Self-discipline is encouraged. Teachers' consistent approach based on mutual respect has a positive impact and results in very good relationships across the college. The system of rewards and sanctions are communicated to students clearly, the code of conduct is posted around the college and appears in the new contact book. Timeout, detention and individual behaviour targets are used to encourage students with more challenging behaviour. There are appropriate procedures in place to deal with bullying.
69. The college counsellor and college nurse are available to students and make a very positive contribution to students' support, guidance and welfare.
70. Child protection procedures are in place and the designated teacher is well qualified to carry out her role effectively. She is well supported by other senior staff. There is appropriate liaison with external agencies and staff are reminded of their responsibilities regularly. New teachers to the college are briefed appropriately. Students who are unwell

or injured whilst at college are well cared for. A good number of staff hold first aid qualifications. There is good attention to matters of health and safety and all staff are encouraged to report any concerns immediately.

71. The 32 students who are resident in the college's boarding provision are well cared for and receive good levels of support and guidance. They include a number of foreign nationals in the sixth form. There are a small number of appropriate rules to guide students. The boarding houses are well staffed and there are good procedures in place to ensure students' health and safety. The stated aims of the boarding provision are met and students are offered a stable, homely environment, which is conducive to their personal and academic development.

Partnership with parents and the community

72. The college provides good information for parents. The prospectus is comprehensive and attractively presented. New parents also receive a 'New Parents' Handbook' which gives a great level of detail about college routines and expectations. Newsletters are sent home regularly: these keep parents well informed of college events and achievements. Community activities and opportunities are also promoted together with information about Parent Staff Association (PSA) events. The college continues to work hard to improve communications with parents and a focus for the Investor in Parents Award is 'communication'. Parents know to look out for correspondence from the College on a Tuesday. Well-presented documentation is made available to students and parents regarding choices for GCSE and sixth-form courses. Parents would, however, like to receive more information about what is being taught and a book list. They are concerned about the lack of textbooks.
73. Formal consultation meetings are held once a year at different times for different year groups. A small number of parents express concern about the early timing of these meetings. Students' progress is also communicated to parents through termly effort reports and an annual written report. Information in reports is satisfactory and provide parents with sufficient information on attainment and progress. In some respects they do not meet statutory requirements: some subjects are commented on together, for example Year 7 reports have geography and history combined. Parents of students with special educational needs are invited to annual reviews as required. A very good booklet, which explains the college's reporting procedures, as well as its approach to marking and homework, is issued to parents.
74. Parents' involvement in their child's learning is satisfactory. A new style of contact book has been introduced this term to try to improve communication. It is expected that parents will review the contents and sign the book once a week. Year group and the whole-college PSA work hard to raise funds for the college and make a valuable contribution to the college's resources and facilities. Other parents are involved in working towards the Investors in Parents Award and are committed to working with the school to develop its partnership and communication with parents.
75. The college has excellent links with the wider community and this extends students' experiences and contributes to their attainment and personal development. Use of the local community and wider area enriches work in lessons.
76. The college is supported extremely well by the local business community who sponsor the college in a number of ways. Significant funds were given to enable the college to successfully bid for Technology College status. Many businesses welcome students for work experience and are involved in on-going projects with GNVQ students. Students take advantage of the courses and opportunities provided through adult and community education organised at the college. Youth activities increasingly provide for young people after college and during college holiday times. Students willingly contribute to life in the community. Students give their time to Riding for the Disabled, working with adults from

the Newcombe Centre and they take a full part in town events such as 'Christmas Cracker'.

77. There are very good links with feeder primary schools. Year 6 students are invited to events, such as a swimming gala and sports day, which are organised by sixth-formers. This gives them the opportunity to become familiar with the college before they transfer. The college works effectively as part of the Academic Council to ensure a smooth transition across the phases for all students.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE COLLEGE

Leadership and management

78. The governors and senior management team give the college a clear educational direction and provide good leadership.
79. The governors have a wide range of experience in industry, commerce and education, which they use to the benefit of the college, for example in their oversight of the curriculum. Their knowledge of the college is not over-reliant on the information provided by the principal and senior staff. They take part in a planned programme of visits to the college that includes meeting staff, students and the observation of teaching. Many are parents of students at the college. Most aspects of the college are effectively monitored and evaluated by governors. For example, they have taken action to improve standards in subjects where they were low and keep a close eye on staffing. However, there is room to sharpen and extend the monitoring and evaluation of the college's activities. Statutory requirements are met apart from the teaching of appropriate information and communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4, the provision of a daily act of collective worship, religious education in the sixth form and reference in the governors' report to parents on the progress in addressing the inspection action plan.
80. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in addressing the key issues referring to the development of a clear and shared understanding of the college's aims and ethos, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and developments and reviewing the time allocated to teaching. Good progress has been made in providing a coherent college development plan that is linked to the college budget but less progress has been made with longer term planning.
81. The principal provides positive leadership for the college. The college is well known to students, parents and staff, all of whom feel they can approach her if they have concerns. Equally the principal knows the students from her high profile around the college. All staff and sometimes students and parents are given the opportunity to contribute to college aims, policies and plans which gives rise to a sense of ownership and helps establish very good working relationships.
82. The responsibilities of the senior management team are clearly laid out in the staff handbook. The team have shared values about education and a common purpose in improving the standards achieved and the quality of education provided.
83. Most subject departments are well managed apart from information and communications technology where there is no effective leadership and vocational education where the individual subjects need co-ordination. Staff are hard working and committed to raising standards. The heads of year ensure students' pastoral needs are met. Routine administration is carried out effectively.
84. A coherent meeting and committee structure ensures regular communication between the different layers of management and between departments. Members of the senior management team are able to monitor the activities of departments through formal links between them and subject departments. The accessibility of the members of the senior management supplements the more formal methods of communication.

85. A system to support, monitor and review teaching is in place but it is over-reliant on the principal who observes teaching in each department on a regular basis. The teachers seen receive written and oral feedback and the outcomes are discussed with head of the department concerned. Action is taken to help teachers who need support. The professional tutor observes newly qualified teachers and those in need of support. Heads of department only observe teachers informally. Similarly governors visit classes and report their impressions. It might be helpful to extend the formal observation of teaching to heads of department and encourage teachers to observe one another's teaching.
86. The system to support, monitor and review the curriculum is shared widely within the college. The resulting curriculum is particularly broad and relevant but with some lack of balance. The first deputy principal has overall responsibility for the college curriculum. The governors' curriculum sub-committee oversee the curriculum carefully. The curriculum is monitored and reviewed by departments and an annual report produced that is discussed with the principal. Such reviews have led to changes in the curriculum and changes of subject syllabus. A major review of the curriculum has recently been carried out that resulted in a number of beneficial changes.
87. The college's aims are widely published and form the basis of the college development plan. A revised set of aims has recently been confirmed by the governors after widespread consultation within college and with parents.
88. The aims are appropriate and refer, amongst other things, to encouraging high achievement in academic and all other fields of endeavour. Parents' approval of the aims and values of the college is reflected in their responses to the parental survey. Students expressed their support for the aims of the college when interviewed during the inspection.
89. Most college policies relate to the aims. They take account of government and local education authority policies. Policies are widely debated at all levels of the college before being presented to governors for approval. The extent to which policies were implemented and monitored and evaluated was criticised in the last inspection report. Most policies are now implemented consistently with a few exceptions, such as the policies for information and communications technology and aspects of the assessment policy. All policies are reviewed by the governors annually and amended when necessary.
90. The learning support department and the support centre for students with special educational needs are well managed. Their roles are closely co-ordinated. Policies are clear and procedures well devised. They work together efficiently, for example by sharing resources and collaborating to meet the needs of students. There are good lines of communication with senior managers although the senior management oversight of special educational needs provision is not clearly stated. The governor with the responsibility for special educational needs maintains close contact with both departments and visits regularly. However, visits are not aimed at specific issues that would assist the governors to evaluate the use of resources for special educational needs.
91. Health and safety is well managed; no major health and safety issues were identified.
92. The college development plan is systematically devised. It reviews the past, considers the present, sets targets for the future and consults widely at all levels of the college. Key issues for the next year are given but longer term priorities are only referred to in general terms. The arrangements for the review and evaluation of the plan are good. There are some shortcomings; progress is rarely quantified and student outcomes are not emphasised in the success criteria. The quality of departmental development plans is uneven. Some such as English are not costed and others such as mathematics are not integrated with the college development plan hence funding is not matched to need.
93. The college has a positive ethos. The college's aim to promote high achievement in all fields of endeavour is actively pursued. The very good relationships between students and students and staff encourage learning. Equal opportunities are promoted. Students with special educational needs are well cared for and a concerted attempt is made to narrow

the gap in the attainment of boys and girls. The ethos differs between the upper and lower school sites in spite of the attempt by the college to view them as equal. The environment of the upper school site is more conducive to learning, the students are more mature and some of the accommodation is very good. The learning environment on the lower school site is adversely affected by the poor quality of some of the classrooms and the relative immaturity of the students.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

94. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have the necessary experience to teach the curriculum. The match of teachers to subjects is good except in religious education where non-specialist teachers are used, information and communication technology, where a shortfall continues since the last inspection, and in vocational education because of a shortage of qualified assessors. There are sufficient non-teaching staff to provide the necessary support for teaching except in modern languages, where there are no language assistants and technician support is lacking, and English which lacks office support. The number of learning support staff for special educational need students is about average. Learning support teachers and assistants provide an effective service. Some classes with a substantial number of students with special educational needs receive insufficient support. The administrative, reprographics and caretaker teams are effective and provide a good service to the college.
95. Professional and personal development needs are identified in departments. Teachers evaluate the outcomes of the courses they have attended although the information is not used in all departments. Whole-college training days have focused on information technology, a recognised need still not fully met. Planning for professional development is not yet supported by a working appraisal system. This gap was identified in the last inspection report and also by the college's initial Investor in People assessment. The college has responded and appraisal arrangements are now in place but not yet operational. Induction for newly qualified teachers is effective and these arrangements meet new statutory requirements.
96. The college occupies two sites about a mile apart. Years 7 and 8 are based on the lower school site and the rest on the upper school site. The split site affects almost all aspects of the college adversely. For example, it affects timetabling, tutoring, registration, access to learning resources, consistency of the curriculum and communication between staff and between teachers and students. The only redeeming feature is that it provides a sheltered atmosphere for students transferring from primary school.
97. Overall the buildings on the upper school site are of a better standard than those of the lower school site. All subject departments are split between the upper and lower school sites so duplication of resources is inevitable. The accommodation for some subject departments are suited but others are dispersed, which means teachers have to carry learning resources between rooms. The accommodation varies in standard from old outdated buildings, which have had no regular maintenance for several years, to new, purpose-built rooms. The teaching accommodation for art and for music on the upper school site is good. The new dining hall and sports hall are excellent. Most subjects have a range of rooms some of them with shortcomings that adversely affect the effective delivery of the curriculum.
98. The use of outside facilities for some subjects helps make up for the shortfall in the college's accommodation to some extent but results in considerable loss of teaching time and extra organisational responsibilities for the teachers.
99. The poor state of maintenance and decoration of some of the older accommodation affects the learning ethos. Many subjects are taught in rooms that are too small, widely dispersed and often shabby. A few rooms are damp. Some teachers have taken it upon themselves to redecorate classrooms in an attempt to improve the learning environment. Many classrooms cannot be darkened, which restricts the use of some visual aids.
100. Poor sign posting makes it difficult for newcomers to negotiate the site. On the upper school site the paint has flaked off some of the signs and they are totally illegible.
101. In some areas the learning environment is enhanced by attractive displays but other areas lack displays and appear barren and bleak.

102. The shortages of textbooks which were noted at the last inspection and by parents remain in design and technology, English, history, modern foreign languages, mathematics, music and science. However, the provision of books in business education, geography, physical education and religious education is good. Deficiencies in mathematics and music restrict attainment and progress.
103. The ratio of books to students is very low by national standards. Library provision of books is, nonetheless, good. Library stocks are up-to-date; old stock is regularly cleared from shelves so that they are uncluttered with obsolete material. The book exchange system of the Devon Schools' Library Service is valuable in this regard. Librarians attempt to identify the needs of departments through the use of curriculum surveys, but not all departments respond. The lower school library is particularly well used. It is full at lunchtimes, and lending rates are high with a strongly growing trend over recent years. Lending rates are not monitored in the upper school library; again this is quite busy at lunchtimes, though less so than the lower school library. There is a full and certificated library skills induction programme for students in Years 7 and 9, and regular class visits.
104. Students' access to information and communication technology resources, as tools for the research and preparation of work, is unsatisfactory. The lower school library has four computers, and the upper school library only one. These are not linked to the college network. The upper school library has Internet access, but there is clearly much competition among students for its use. There are few CD-Roms available for use. Within departments, computer provision is variable. For English, geography, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and vocational subjects, provision is inadequate: vocational subjects have to share the booking of computer facilities, and this restricts the opportunities for students to develop their information and communication technology key skills and to word-process assignments. Science and mathematics have their own computer suite and are well provided for.
105. The ratio of computers to students is very low by national standards. Recent investment has improved aspects of provision, including the upgrade of the main computer room to allow Internet access, improvement in design and technology resources, and an active video conference link to combine German classes with another school. When rooms are free, students have access to computers in the suited rooms, and there is a small open-access area available to students in the main computer room. However, not all students have log-in and password codes to give them access to the college network.
106. The college makes very good use of the local community and the wider world as a learning resource. This is particularly the case in vocational subjects where local businesses and community organisations provide a great deal of research data, work experience placements, project opportunities and published materials.

The efficiency of the college

107. The college has an income above the national average, partly due to the extra money allocated to run the two sites. The detailed college development plan and associated departmental plans review achievement of previous targets and set appropriate ones for the coming year. There is an annual planning cycle for the preparation of all plans. Virtually all plans are for one year only with, in some cases, an indication of longer-term aims. There are no plans for three to five years to identify longer-term needs. Departmental plans, commonly costed, have a limited relationship to needs as almost all departmental capitation is allocated by formula. The previous report identified that the development plans had clear priorities and reviews helped improve efficiency, which continues to be true with particularly improved attainment by students. Departmental planning is now more consistent. However, plans do not fully identify the cost of resources to meet curriculum need and where departments have identified them the college budget has been too inflexible. Longer-term development plans and prioritisation of needs would help overcome the long-standing shortages of learning resources.

108. Staffing costs are well above average, in part necessitated by the need to travel between the two sites. The contact ratio is slightly lower than average. Administrative and clerical support staff costs are around 50 per cent above the average. Allowing for the extra costs of the twin site, teaching staff are used efficiently. There is some higher than usual expenditure due to splitting classes into small groups. Shortcomings in the organisation of the timetable such as time allocations, split classes, double and triple lessons and the uneven distribution of time across the two weeks adversely effect students' attainment and progress. The problematic accommodation on two sites is used effectively but the dispersion of the accommodation for some subjects creates problems for teachers. The shortage of learning resources identified at the last inspection still pertains and is unsatisfactory with, for example, students having to share textbooks. Learning resources are used effectively but are subject to more wear and tear than usual due to the nature of buildings and need to move equipment.
109. Financial control systems are very efficient and accurate. Governors and senior management monitor expenditure regularly. Governors are fully involved in planning and monitoring, including class visits. The recent audit report identified a large number of very minor items for improvement but on all substantive matters was positive.
110. The college has improved since the last inspection, test and examination results are better and attainment is now above average. It is an effective college and provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

111. In the Key Stage 3 national tests in 1998 the proportions of students reaching Level 5 and Level 6 and above were below the national averages and well below those for similar schools. However, girls achieved better than boys and reached the national average for girls. In 1999 the results were much better. At Key Stage 4, in GCSE English language in 1998 the proportion of A*-C grades matched the national average, and improved a little in 1999. In GCSE English literature in 1998 the A*-C grades also matched the national average: there was some decline from 1997, which continued in 1999. In both English examinations the results of girls have been significantly better than those of boys, the difference reaching around 30 percentage points. A minority of students for whom GCSE is not a suitable goal have achieved well in the Certificate of Achievement. At A-level in 1998 all candidates for the English language and literature examination passed, with A and B grades well above the national average. Results in 1999 were similarly successful.
112. In the lessons seen, students overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 are reaching the national average. In the sixth form many students are producing above average work; at each key stage, some students' work is very good. At Key Stage 3, students' oral work tends to outshine their writing and reading. They are articulate in discussion and perceptive about their reading. The listening skills however of many students in Years 7 and 8 are limited. Many students, particularly in Year 9, can read aloud clearly and with expression. In a variety of writing tasks they write imaginatively and perceptively. In general the presentation and accuracy of students' writing do not match its content. Students successfully undertake a reasonable variety of reading, including Shakespeare. The weakest students with special educational needs are withdrawn from English and receive good support. At Key Stage 4, oral attainment varies considerably, but group discussion, for instance about a class novel, is productive and disparate students can work profitably together. Some students seen in a mixed ability class read out their own writing clearly and with interest. In reading Shakespeare, students can refer accurately to the text and the ablest have a wide vocabulary in explanation. Some, mainly boys, find the language of 'Macbeth' very difficult. While some writing is reasonably neat, much writing at Key Stage 4 is again untidily presented, though a minority is well produced on a word processor. Students in the sixth form have a good understanding and are articulate in considering a text together. All are able to contribute ideas, and some have very good conceptual understanding. Their personal writing, composed for instance in response to their reading of Seamus Heaney, is outstanding. Students work at a good pace and their standards are above course requirements.
113. On entry to the college students' achievements as measured by standardised tests are average or a little below average. By the end of Key Stage 3, current students have maintained the national average, and some, mainly girls, are well above it. Progress in Year 9 is generally better than in Years 7 and 8. At Key Stage 4 progress tends to be more even and by the end of Year 11 a substantial number of students are well ahead of national averages. The difference in achievement however of girls and most boys is marked. In the sixth form students make good progress, particularly in their conceptual thinking.
114. In accordance with the ethos of the college, students are co-operative and generally committed to their work. They respond well to the suitably pitched work set by the teachers. At Key Stage 3 there is a marked difference of attitude between many students in Years 7 and 8 in the lower school and those in Year 9. The former, whilst not uncooperative, tend to be noisy and inattentive, so that the pace of work slows and

Students at Key Stage 4 work well and readily respond to their teachers. One or two groups in Year 11 have less confidence and work rather slowly. Sixth-formers demonstrate thorough and well-disposed attitudes to their work. They are willing to share their work with one another and are without pretensions.

115. The quality of teaching ranges from merely satisfactory to very good. Overall, it is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3, but there is some very good teaching at each stage. No teaching is unsatisfactory. The thirteen teachers of English have good professional knowledge of the subject, which underlies their successful practice. Teamwork and corporate professional development although present are limited by the fact that six teachers are part-time and that teachers must travel regularly between the two sites. The department lacks administrative support. Lessons however are invariably well prepared and planned, and almost all lessons are interesting and challenging. Resources are well used. In the large mixed-ability groups at Key Stages 3 and 4 there is still a need for more differentiated teaching and resources, building on those which have been devised since the previous inspection. Teaching methods and organisation are reasonably consistent across the curriculum. Students are given frequent opportunities to develop oral skills by small group discussions and presentations. Continuous and personal writing feature frequently and are also evident and celebrated at sixth-form level. Classroom relations are invariably good. Homework is regularly and usefully set and used.
116. The English curriculum has recently been revised, partly in the light of the last inspection report. Courses are suitable and meet National Curriculum requirements, with the exception of those relating to information and communication technology. In Years 7 and 8 there are several groups who are timetabled with more than one teacher: continuity of provision is affected. There is much better co-ordination in Year 9, which also provides better differentiation according to the students' abilities. Assessment by teachers is full, diagnostic and helpful, although not entirely in accordance with the college marking policy: the several forms of assessment at Key Stage 3 might be simplified to reduce the marking load on teachers and enable students and parents to have simpler indications of attainment and progress.
117. The department is well led; leadership is thoughtful and purposeful and departmental responsibilities are sensibly distributed.

Mathematics

118. Students enter the college with average attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3 their Standard Assessment Test results for 1998 in mathematics were close to the national average for both boys and girls. However the results in 1999 were very significantly better. GCSE examination results in 1998 were also above the national average for the percentage of students gaining grades A*-C. Boys' and girls' performance was similar. The pass rate at A-level in 1998 was similar to the national average but the proportion of A and B grades was above average. Results in 1999 were a little lower. The general trend over recent years at all three levels has been upwards.
119. Attainment in lessons is above average at both key stages and in the sixth form. Students' knowledge and understanding of number and algebra, space and shape and data handling is good. However, there is a common weakness in numeracy particularly in mental arithmetic which the college has identified and is addressing with some signs of success.
120. Progress is good during both key stages and very good in the sixth form. Progress is clearly related to the quality of teaching with clear explanation of concepts and the good attitudes of students. They are generally increasingly well motivated as they move up the college, an attitude engendered by the college and the mathematics department in particular. This was exemplified by the rate at which Year 12 students gained knowledge, understanding and skill in solving problems on interest rates in one lesson and to sketch

curves of equations in another. Progress is best in classes where students have the highest level of motivation. Inconsistency in setting homework for some classes and its completion by some students inhibits faster progress. Inadequate expectations and marking of written work in some exercise books are also unhelpful. Students with special educational needs progress at a similar pace to others in their classes.

121. The attitudes of students to mathematics is good at both key stages and very good in the sixth form. Only one class in Year 7 was observed where students' response was unsatisfactory and some students wasted time. It was the second of two mathematics lessons in a row, the text provision was inadequate for differentiation and few students remained on task for long. Students in the sixth form are very motivated and mature; enjoyment of the subject is the norm. The length of lessons at just over three-quarters of an hour makes a significant contribution to ensuring that students can maintain interest and sustain concentrated work. Competence at personal study is particularly good in the sixth form.
122. Teaching overall is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. It is seldom less than satisfactory and in one third of lessons seen it was very good. Lessons have greater pace than at the previous inspection. Much of the good teaching can be described as traditional and effective. Setting from Year 9 makes a significant contribution to helping differentiation, although there is still some scope to challenge the more able students further. This latter is particularly true in Years 7 and 8 where students are taught in mixed ability classes. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and topics are generally well prepared with clear and appropriate aims and objectives. Teachers' explanations are accurate and clear. In one Year 9 lesson on scatter graphs the lesson was very well planned with a good balance of whole-class work, very clear explanation and written work for students. It was challenging with the right balance where students discovered things for themselves. High expectations coupled with a dynamic pace were evident in an enjoyable sixth-form lesson on trigonometric identities. The lesson was well planned, exposition was brief but clear and enhanced by good whole-class oral questioning. Time was used well and students worked quickly. Students were well managed in most lessons. The routine marking is variable. The best is very good, but some gives little guide to students and poor levels of presentation are accepted. Homework is also variable in regularity and relevance too often inadequate to help reinforce work learned in lessons.
123. Mathematics has only just adequate curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4. Setting helps match topics, tasks and pace to the differing abilities of students in Years 9 to 11. Work is less well matched to students' differing abilities in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 and 8. Subject leadership is good, departmental policies are clear, the annual review and development plans are helpful. There is a need for greater monitoring of homework and marking.
124. Accommodation for mathematics is far from ideal, split between two sites. Some rooms on the lower school site suffer from solar overheating and at certain times of the day, glare. In one lesson on fractions, students worked well despite the very high temperatures, even in the first lesson of the day. Some rooms are depressing, not having been decorated for many years and are only brightened by good displays of students' work. The standard of teaching is affected by lack of access to visual aids. For example, there is only one working overhead projector, which would be very helpful when explaining topics such as graphs and shapes. Textbooks for Years 7 and 8 are inadequate.
125. The mathematics department has improved since the last inspection and provides good value for money.

Science

126. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in the 1998 Standardised Attainment Tests was close to the national average. In 1999 greater emphasis was placed on preparing students

for the tests and the results were higher. GCSE results were above average in 1998 as they have been for some years past. Boys and girls have attained equally well at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The ranges of GCSE grades by boys and girls are similar. A-level results in 1998 were well above average in biology, chemistry and physics, showing an increasing overall trend since 1996. The proportion of A and B grades has been above the national average. In human biology results are close to average reflecting the wide range of ability of the candidates. Students with special educational needs attain well at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.

127. Attainment in class at Key Stage 3 is above average. Teachers complete their teaching of the course at the end of Year 9, some two months after the national tests, which lowers test scores. An above average proportion of students attain the nationally expected level or above in biology, physics and chemistry. For example in a middle ability Year 9 group many students showed a good understanding of fractional distillation, in a lesson of high expectations and enthusiasm. Good planning of challenging work raises attainment in Key Stage 4. By the end of Year 11 most students' attainment in all three branches of science is above average. At the end of both key stages most students also understand the principles of investigative science at an appropriate level: fair testing is well understood, as is the objective evaluation of their work. Attainment in A-level classes is usually above average due to teachers' high expectations and thorough planning.
128. Progress during Key Stage 3 is good. Year 7 students soon learn about accurate measurement and begin to understand the use of chemical symbols. The work in students' books shows the departments rising expectation of students, which is reflected in their progress. Many Year 8 students made good progress learning about series and parallel electrical circuits. However, in a few Year 8 lessons, a small minority of boys' progress is adversely affected by immature behaviour. Special needs students progress well; in a middle Year 9 class good progress by a well motivated student was noted in work relating to fractional distillation.
129. Progress during Key Stage 4 is good. Students understand what they are expected to learn and challenging work is carefully planned to build on their previous knowledge. Good progress by special needs students is a notable feature: in a Year 10 lower attaining single science GCSE class, sensitive support from special needs assistants gave the students a good understanding of the elastic properties of materials. In lessons and work inspected, no clear distinction between boys' and girls' progress was noted.
130. In A-level classes most students' progress is consistently very good in all subjects and is the product of high expectations and challenging work. Particularly good progress was noted in a biology class studying the thyroid gland in which good independent study skills were reinforced.
131. Students' attitude and behaviour are frequently very good, contributing constructively to their progress. There is good co-operation between students, particularly in practical work, and with teachers. In most lessons, students work well, show interest and are well behaved, displaying interest in their work. Low attaining students benefit from more frequent supportive intervention by teachers and assistants. During class discussions most students listen to each other and teachers attentively, particularly in A-level groups, valuing each other's views. Students are polite and there is respect for property.
132. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. In A-level classes it is often very good, challenging students to think about and apply their scientific knowledge, for example, in discussions on energy forms, revision work on enzymes or when studying acids in organic chemistry. Teachers plan lessons well with learning aims that students understand, for example in a Year 9 group studying the periodic table. In a few lessons there is insufficient emphasis on reinforcing of investigative skills, but these are generally well taught throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards of teaching have improved, with around one third of lessons judged very good. Teaching is effectively supported by continuously revised schemes of work and in most lessons work is

suitably challenging. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored in the department, helping to sustain standards. Homework is set regularly, but marking fails to give students sufficient guidance for further progress and too many spelling errors go unchallenged. Teachers effectively ensure that most unfinished or missed work is completed. In lessons teachers usually manage students well and achieve high standards of discipline and behaviour.

133. The leadership of the science department is strong and effective. Planning to improve the curriculum is good and its impact is apparent. Teachers are well supported in raising standards. New and student teachers are given good support by the head of department. Three hard-working technicians provide a valuable and very efficient service. The department now has modern computer resources that contribute significantly to students' progress in data logging and spreadsheet use, particularly in Year 9. Resources for learning are not adequate: there is insufficient range of suitable software for the new computers, insufficient textbooks for college use and none to support homework. Some equipment is in short supply, much is now ageing. The department is very adept at making the best use of available resources and filling gaps with self-help initiatives, thereby minimising the negative impact on standards. Two laboratories have been modernised but the overall suitability of the remaining laboratories is unsatisfactory, particularly on the lower school site. On the upper school site one unsuitable remote biology laboratory is damp and has poor and unsafe access for technician support.

OTHER SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Information and communications technology (ICT)

134. Attainment in information and communications technology (ICT) at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is below average. At Key Stage 3, ICT is taught to Year 7 by the humanities department, to Year 8 by the design and technology department and to Year 9 by the science department. The skills students learn in the communication strand in Year 7 are not assessed. Students' low level of attainment is largely due to their lack of exposure to ICT throughout their schooling. This is a reflection of the limited resources and the limited timetable for ICT.
135. Students' rate of progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is poor. This is due to students' low attainment on entry compounded by the limited curricular provision at Key Stages 3 and 4. Students are slow to become familiar with the desktop environment and with the various software applications. Students with computers at home, about half the cohort, make better progress.
136. Students' response to learning ICT is good. Their limited attainment and progress in the subject is not due to their attitude, behaviour or response. Given the opportunity students are keen to use computers and are willing and rapid learners.
137. The judgement that the quality of the teaching is unsatisfactory throughout the college refers to the teaching of ICT through other subjects. Some good teaching occurs at Key Stage 3. Although the number of teachers qualified and experienced to teach ICT is insufficient there are some pockets of expertise and some excellent practices emerging, for example in science, religious education, design and technology and mathematics. Other subjects, such as history, special educational needs, business education, geography, music and physical education are beginning to show a real interest in ICT and an increasingly effective use of computers in their teaching.
138. Management and leadership of ICT are unsatisfactory. The vital role of co-ordinating the cross-curricular delivery of the subject and co-ordinating the assessment process has not been accomplished. At the time of the inspection, an ICT co-ordinator was not in post but had been advertised internally. An ICT committee comprising representatives from each

The college is well placed to improve the provision of ICT. Plans for the leadership and development of the subject are realistic and show vision.

139. There are insufficient teachers who feel capable of teaching their subject through the medium of ICT. Some expertise exists and many teachers are willing to learn. A major programme of in-service training is required. The present arrangements to teach ICT in the college are ineffective. Students' progress is insufficient and access to ICT to improve personal study skills is inadequate. Teachers' assessment of ICT at Key Stage 3 is inaccurate.
140. Since the last inspection standards have fallen and the number of computers, the system of assessment and recording, the curriculum, the software and the training of staff all remain inadequate.

Religious education

141. GCSE results for grades A*-C were above the national average in 1998 and even better in 1999. The proportion of A* and A grades is high. Results for the new short course at GCSE were well above the national average. At A-level the number of candidates is very small but the results have been close to the national average over the last three years. Girls significantly outperform boys at both GCSE and A-level.
142. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with national expectations: it is not consistent within or across year groups, due to the use of non-specialist staff and the inadequate curriculum time allocated. The attainment of students in Key Stage 4 is above national expectations and remains so in the sixth form for those who follow the A-level course. For other sixth-formers it is below national expectations due to the lack of other than a token provision. Students at the end of Key Stage 3 possess a knowledge and understanding of Christianity, other world faiths and the attendant religious ideas. They possess and use the technical vocabulary to describe the religious teachings, beliefs and practices; they are developing their thinking and analytical skills as well as insights into the relationship between religious faiths and moral and social issues. Key Stage 4 students have an in-depth knowledge of Christianity and the other world faiths studied, together with the Christian standpoint related to contemporary social and moral issues. There is a focus upon ethics, morals and philosophy which enables students to practice and portray their skills in analysing, synthesising, drawing conclusions and making inferences/deductions in relation to the contemporary world. At A-level the skills developed at Key Stages 3 and 4 are applied and extended in relation to the complex religious, moral, ethical and philosophical issues required by the examination syllabus.
143. Students with special educational needs are supported and encouraged; their attainment is commensurate with that of their peers.
144. While overall progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, it is slower in Years 8 and 9: due to a lack of information about students' experiences and attainment on entry to the college. During Key Stage 4 progress is good, due to the high expectations of teachers who require students to reflect carefully on the subject; the resultant attainment is better than might be expected. Students with special educational needs make good progress during both key stages. In the sixth form the good progress is maintained, enhanced by small group numbers.
145. The behaviour of the great majority of students is good and in all but a few instances they are polite, co-operative and pleasant towards one another. There are pockets of poor behaviour from boys in Key Stage 3; such behaviour is characteristic of lessons taught in inadequate accommodation, by non-specialists, to mixed ability groups containing a significant number of very low attainers. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the behaviour of students is very good; they are keen to learn, willing to take part and help one another and express a liking for the subject. Many students are beginning to see the value

of the subject to their career. The high numbers, some fifty, who opt for the GCSE full course, is testimony to the positive view held of the subject.

146. Teaching overall is very good; just over half the lessons seen were very good with three quarters good or better. Although teaching overall at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, there is a wide variation in quality; poor accommodation, low expectations, lack of pace and subject expertise contribute to the unsatisfactory teaching. In other situations and especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where specialist teaching is the norm, the teaching is very good. In these lessons there are high expectations, good relationships and good discipline; students are challenged and required to think within an environment which promotes mutual respect.
147. Assessment at Key Stage 3 needs to be more closely related to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus; the department recognises this and has already begun to address the issue. Assessment at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good; it is tied to the examination criteria and carried out effectively. Marking at Key Stage 3 is regular but sometimes lacking in purpose or consistency; attention needs to be paid to the completion of work, presentation and spelling. Diagnostic commentary, a strong feature of the work at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is not as evident at Key Stage 3. Homework is set regularly and is integral to the work.
148. The department benefits from very good leadership and management. The ethos of the department promotes mutual respect; it enables students to test out ideas and be reflective, so making a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the achievement of the college's aims. The inadequate provision in the sixth form means that the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus are not being met. Careful consideration needs to be given to the most effective way of using non-specialist staff.
149. Classroom accommodation overall is unsatisfactory; the base rooms in the upper and lower schools are satisfactory while the staff base/resource room is very good; however, a significant proportion of classes are held in rooms designated for other subjects scattered across the college requiring staff to be itinerant. This has an adverse effect upon standards. Learning resources and materials overall are good; they are appropriate and adequate except in the sixth-form where there is a shortage of specialist materials to meet the students' needs for private study. Extensive use is made of resources, both human and physical, external to the college.
150. Since the last inspection, the department has worked hard to remedy the deficiencies identified. It is well placed to continue to develop.

Art

151. GCSE results in 1998 were below the national average for grades A*-C and average for grades A*-G. In 1999 GCSE results were better. Girls significantly outperformed boys. Over several years GCSE results have been average. A-level results in 1998 were close to the national average for the percentage of A and B grades and the pass rate. The results were slightly lower in 1999. A-level results show a downward trend over several years.
152. Attainment by the majority of students at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is in line with national expectations. Girls outperform boys.
153. At Key Stage 3 the majority of students understand the purpose of sketchbooks and use them well. In some project work there is very limited research to support students' ideas. Most students have a reasonable grasp of using different art mediums, for example pencil, charcoal paints and clay. They are able to respond positively to the boldness of Giacometti's work by using free brushwork in a figure drawing although few achieve expressive results partly because paintbrushes are too small. They do not attain sufficiently in planning a clay figure because preliminary sketches are not effective for learning about form and proportion. The methods of reduction printing are taught well

Students are able to make good printing blocks and operate the press to achieve clean prints. All students can evaluate the quality of their print.

154. By the end of Key Stage 4 a minority of higher attaining students make above average charcoal figure drawings. They are able to control form and proportion in their work by skilled use of light and shade contrasts. The majority of students are more tentative in drawing and struggle to understand form and proportion. They respond well when investigating artists' work, learning about colour and techniques with paints and pastels. Students approach coursework and examination assignments using research and experiment to elaborate their ideas. A few students, despite gathering information and materials, are unable to extend their ideas on a theme much beyond an immediate literal response.
155. In the sixth form the majority of students have good observational drawing skills. Self-portraiture is handled confidently. The investigation of artists' techniques and styles improves the standards of drawing and the use of media. Students understand the importance of research and allow their ideas to develop entirely from the discoveries and influences of a wide range of imagery and materials including the work of artists. Written critical studies of artists and art movements are thoroughly researched, setting out an authoritative and personal account analysing the artists, their art and its contexts.
156. Progress by the majority of students is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Very good progress was made in a Year 9 printing lesson because the teacher's printing expertise determined effective planning and organisation so students make a good print and knew why it was good. Otherwise drawing and the use of colour are not always consolidated well. When there is a match good progress occurs as in Year 7 where students learn several drawing skills such as getting a figure in proportion. Progress is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The majority use sketchbooks and preparatory studies with increasing effectiveness to develop ideas and understand the importance of research. Progress is slowed occasionally when students fail to consider the possibilities for painting a self-portrait presented by many artists. By Year 13 students search through the diversity of art to stimulate and form ideas.
157. Students enjoy art and treat the subject seriously when challenged sufficiently. They will discuss work confidently when given the opportunity. Students in the lower school, particularly boys, do not concentrate as well as students elsewhere. Behaviour is nearly always good although in one case a student had to leave a lesson because of his poor behaviour. When teachers expect students to take complete charge of organising equipment and materials they do so very efficiently.
158. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All teachers have a good knowledge of art and expertise in a broad range of art work, for example in printmaking. Consequently, expectations are often high. The observational figure drawing in Year 10, the charcoal self-portraits in Year 12 and printmaking in Year 9 all present students with good challenges. A productive pace is achieved and sustained in some long lessons. Homework assignments usually fulfil an effective research function and they remain very relevant to work in lessons. In planning lessons, learning objectives are frequently unclear, particularly at Key Stage 3. This sometimes causes a mismatch between the teaching method, the choice of materials and the intended outcomes of the lesson; for example the drawing method for planning a clay figure. When teachers involve students in discussing and evaluating their own work and that of others it helps to clarify what they should strive to attain. Teachers frequently explain to students individually how their work may be improved. All teachers manage students confidently and sensitively. They are firm and set high standards for behaviour in the lower school.
159. The art curriculum is broad providing several options for accreditation at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Examination syllabuses are adhered to well although curriculum planning for Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. This weakness is understood by the department and is being addressed by a revision of the scheme of work. The department has not

incorporated information and communication technology applications into curriculum planning despite being judged a weakness in the last inspection. The accommodation is good and there is considerable scope for organising some rooms for specific purposes such as observational drawing. Storage facilities for students' work, equipment and materials are very good. Resources are satisfactory overall although the quantity and accessibility of books and other reference materials is unsatisfactory. Year 7 students exhibit the art work they have done in primary school and students going onto the sixth form exhibit their GCSE examination work. In both instances there is a recognition of what these students have achieved which attaches importance to continuing their artistic development.

Design and technology

160. In 1998 at GCSE the proportion of students obtaining A*-C grades was close to the national average. Results in 1999 were slightly lower. At A-level, in 1998, all candidates passed but none obtained grades A or B. In 1999 over half the candidates gained A or B grades.
161. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form are in line with national expectations and above them at the end of Key Stage 4. The proportion of students producing exceptional work is below the national average. This is borne out by the lower than expected number of A* grades at GCSE and A grades at A-level. Throughout the college students' designing and making skills are satisfactory and well related. They are good at transferring the skills learned between the different areas of design and technology. Students' presentation skills, study skills and taking responsibility for their own learning are less well developed.
162. Progress during Key Stage 3 is generally satisfactory although higher ability students are capable of greater progress. Good teaching and the positive attitudes of students promote progress. Students remember prior learning such as technical terms and are able to build on it to extend their knowledge and understanding. Occasionally, when teachers have low expectation of students' behaviour, progress is held back by the immature behaviour of some boys. Incidences of this nature are more likely to happen at the end of triple periods, when the concentration of lower ability students has waned. Teachers need to use a wider range of activities to sustain interest and motivation in those very long lessons. Progress during Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and could be significantly improved if study skills and research habits were developed earlier in Key Stage 3. Presentation skills, quality and standards of work, develop too late to secure the best examination grades. Progress during A-level is good and could be increased if students who have little prior knowledge of the subject, were made fully aware of the demands and rigour of the subject earlier in their course.
163. Students are interested and motivated in their design and technology lessons, which increases their attainment. Some Year 9 students behave immaturely in class to the detriment of their own progress and that of others. It is not until well into Key Stage 4 that students begin to take real responsibility for their own learning.
164. The quality of teaching is good throughout the college. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject and plan and resource their lessons well. The standard of teaching could be improved by sharing good practice more widely. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met.
165. The department is well led and managed. The departmental development plan is realistic and shows vision. Effective and efficient use is made of resources, both physical and human. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 is too generous, largely due to the absence of standardised portfolios of students' assessed work.

166. Since the last inspection standards of attainment, the quality of teaching, the schemes of work and use of computers have improved and unsuitable accommodation has been renovated. Students' ability to plan and manage their coursework is still under-developed.

Drama

167. Attainment at GCSE in 1998 was just above the national average for grades A*-C and all students obtained a grade. Results for grades A*-C in 1999 were lower.
168. Attainment in drama by the end of Key Stage 3 is of a good standard. Students in Year 9, for example, can understand and express in dialogue the concept that 'status is behaviour, not a role'. They are able to comment perceptively on their own and others' performances. Attainment of students with special educational needs is good. They are fully involved in all activities. Students' attainment at Key Stage 4 has varied from year to year because the subject is optional for GCSE and there is no selection by ability. Attainment in Year 11 is in line with national expectations.
169. Students make very good progress during Key Stage 3. They arrive with limited skills. They do not understand the difference between movement and gesture, and their own movements, while energetic, are not always fully controlled. In lessons they make steady gains as in Year 9 where each exercise in dialogue extends their confidence and the length of the dialogues they are able to sustain. Similar progress is made by Year 7 in mime. In Year 11 progress is satisfactory and in Year 10 it is very good. Students in both key stages are enthusiastic about drama and it is a popular option at GCSE.
170. Teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Lessons include extensive activities and carefully graded tasks which stretch and challenge students progressively. Discipline is firmly maintained despite the lively nature of the activities.
171. The curriculum is well-planned, with clear aims for every lesson within each project. Drama makes a good contribution to students' personal and social education and moral development, through consideration of issues such as homelessness. Accommodation for drama is restricted on both lower and upper school sites: the GCSE groups in particular are constrained in group work by the limited space in the upper school. This shortfall is mitigated by use of the Drama Centre which offers some groups a much better working space. The department has just sufficient books for Key Stage 4 but lacks other resources such as a CD player, a selection of props and, on the upper school site, appropriate specialist lighting.

Geography

172. GCSE results in 1998 were well above the national average for grades A*-C and A*-G. Results have improved during the period 1996 to 1999. Girls outperform boys but both exceed their national averages. A-level results in 1998 were well above the national average; they have improved steadily since 1996.
173. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Students learn key skills such as map work as early as Year 7; by Year 8 they can locate photographs on to the correct places in maps. In Year 9 many know how to explain the major variations in the world population distribution and use a basic geographical vocabulary in their work. There are some weaknesses in their knowledge of place. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above national expectations; Year 11 students have good recall of work covered in Year 10 and can answer questions on topics like rivers and farming with confidence. They show some weaknesses in knowledge of place. Students have good map and data handling skills, which are well demonstrated in their course work. At A-level attainment is above national expectations. Students in Year 12 showed very good understanding of the indices of development applied to less economically developed countries; at this early

stage of the A-level course they show strong knowledge of the appropriate geographical vocabulary.

174. During Key Stage 3 progress is good. Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations. Careful lesson planning helps students build on prior learning. Work is usually effectively differentiated so that students are given challenging, but achievable, goals. A Year 9 group with a very wide range of ability made good progress due to the teacher's care in providing a range of resources closely matched to students' abilities. Students worked briskly and with interest on analysing population data, seeking and getting help when it was needed.
175. During Key Stage 4 students make very good progress. Teachers' close attention to recapitulating earlier learning before building on it is a strong factor. Teachers maintain a strong focus on the needs of the examination syllabus, regularly setting examination style questions. They give very clear explanations that help guide students in the right direction. The high expectations of teachers are invariably reflected in the performance of students.
176. Progress during A-level is good. Where students carry out practical tasks they are frequently closely engaged and ask intelligent questions. Careful planning and consolidation enhance progress.
177. Students enjoy geography, their response is frequently positive. They like answering questions, show involvement, are attentive and contribute well to discussions. They respond well to challenge and behaviour is usually good. They relate well to one another and to their teachers. Occasionally they are slow to settle down at the beginning of lessons. Teachers' discipline is usually firm but on the rare occasions when it falters students' behaviour can be unacceptable. Students demonstrate skills as independent learners and work well in groups. They move from task to task within lessons with minimal fuss and are good listeners. Many have the maturity to react with sensitivity to serious issues, like those raised by variable population densities across the world.
178. The quality of geography teaching is good throughout the college. Teaching at A-level is characterised by teachers' good subject knowledge and good relationships with students. Teachers have high, but not unreasonable, expectations of students so that Year 12 students in their first few weeks of their course are carefully encouraged to develop their essay writing techniques. In a very good Year 13 lesson students were challenged to undertake and evaluate a cost benefit analysis exercise, making use of an excellent range and well deployed learning resources, a brisk pace and a clear focus on the preparation required to undertake coursework. On other occasions students are encouraged to engage in their own research using the Internet. At Key Stage 4 teachers have very good subject knowledge, lessons are well planned and invariably proceed at a good pace. In almost every lesson students are very well managed and teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and academic performance which are invariably met by the students. The enthusiasm of teachers helps to promote progress. An excellent Year 11 lesson exemplified these strengths; rigorous teaching, relentless pace and very high expectations aided by a very good student response ensured that all made excellent progress in considering the population trends indicated by various population pyramids. At Key Stage 3 work is usually effectively differentiated in the mixed ability groups. At best students are well managed and lessons have a purposeful air, proceeding at a good pace to meet the clearly expressed lesson aims. Weaker teaching is characterised by expectations that are too low and a lack of pace, which hampers progress. A Year 8 lesson on rivers had a range of useful and varied activities but the pace was slack and the brief explanation at the start of the lesson by the teacher lacked clarity. Throughout the college teaching has insufficient emphasis on where studies are located in the world.
179. The curriculum is well planned and is subject to continual revision. There is a good range of field-work opportunities. Assessment of geography is thorough. Students are subject to regular and varied assessments which are moderated to allow accurate reporting of National Curriculum Levels at Key Stage 3 but this does not lead to the setting of targets

at Key Stage 3. The department fails to report to parents on geography as a separate subject in Year 7. Monitoring of planning is good but monitoring of teaching only happens occasionally. A proportion of lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms which can lead to some difficulty and increases the demands on staff. Resources are good but there are too few computers for students' use.

180. Since the last inspection attainment at Key Stage 3 has remained above the national average, GCSE results have improved considerably and A-level results have also improved. Aspects of information and communications technology are better taught through geography and criticisms of a lack of enquiry skills in teaching have been addressed effectively.

History

181. GCSE results in 1998 for grades A*-C and A*-G were above the national average. In 1999 the results were much lower. A-level results in 1998 were below the national average pass rate but with a high proportion of A and B grades. In 1999 they were slightly higher.
182. Attainment by the majority at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. For a significant minority of students it is just above. Students are learning how to discover and use evidence competently. In an introduction to studying slavery, students use the Internet and library resources to obtain positive images of black people and describe the reactions of people at the time, which helps to develop their own understanding and interpretation of events. In related work they identify the economic factors responsible for Bristol's wealth and evaluate the problems that would arise if the slave trade were abolished. Using evidence from a film, students gain a perception of power and learn how rulers used it and manipulated the feelings of those who were subject to it.
183. Attainment by the majority at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average. For a significant minority of students it is above. Key skills not tackled effectively in the past are now being addressed well. In consequence students' source analysis is improving and helps their understanding of continuity and change over time. Drawing together evidence over several hundred years, they can analyse the influence of Christianity and Islam on developments in medicine and how they both hindered and advanced medical knowledge.
184. In the sixth form standards are well above the national average. Students are perceptive in their analysis of conflicting forces and ideas. In identifying the consequences of the Act of Union with Ireland, students appreciate the way it influenced all sections of Irish society. Their ability to tease out implicit evidence is an additional skill of a high order. This is because of the wide and interpretative level of their reading, also apparent in their competent analysis of sources on the Spanish Civil War. They show good analytical skill and written work indicates that they have well-developed independent learning skills. This includes students with special needs. They are competent in the use of advanced texts and are able to make critical judgements and evaluate the differing opinions of specialist authors. Their reading at best is interpretative and stylistic and this is reflected in their writing.
185. The majority of students in Key Stage 3 make good progress. A quarter make very good progress. Students with special needs make good progress. The majority of students in Key Stage 4 make very good progress. Students with special needs make good progress particularly in those classes where additional support is provided. Students in the sixth form make excellent progress. Mostly students behave well because teachers manage their classes well and establish an appropriate learning environment. Several students in Year 8 have poor social skills and are immature. Occasionally they do not co-operate and become disruptive and consequently under-achievement occurs.
186. The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons is very good. It was good or better in more than three-quarters of lessons. Generally good relationships are the basis of good

class control. This has a positive effect on attitudes, which have an impact on attainment and progress. Teachers communicate their strong knowledge of and enthusiasm for history to students and that influences attainment. It is particularly effective in developing the wide reading of sixth-form students. Lesson organisation is generally good and includes the use of appropriate resources for students with language difficulties. Teachers use time targets effectively to set a brisk pace to lessons. Very good introductory explanations lead on to good interactive sessions and a challenging level of work. Expectations are high, the targets being realistic and based now on thorough assessment procedures. Independent learning skills are encouraged strongly through project work, the outcome being some good examination assignments. Homework extends the work of the classroom and helps students develop their higher learning skills. Marking is done thoroughly and teachers are ready to help students who are experiencing difficulties.

187. Several issues relating to attainment and progress and teaching have been addressed effectively by changed procedures and personnel. Some issues remain unresolved or only partially resolved. There are still students at Key Stage 3 whose attitude is poor. The amount of curricular time is still below average particularly at Key Stage 3. Learning resources do not match the needs of the curriculum. The dispersed teaching rooms restricts teaching opportunities.
188. Leadership now is strong and positive and the resultant teamwork is a major factor in the quality of the department's new or revised procedures. Potentially very good procedures are in place for monitoring teaching, assessment and tracking individual student's progress and these are already being used effectively to revise schemes of work, assessment tasks and the curriculum. The influence of new management is already having a positive effect on attainment and progress.

Modern foreign languages

189. GCSE examination results at A*-C in both French and German in 1998 were well above the national average and included a high proportion of grade A* and A grades. Results in 1997 were equally good whilst those in 1999 were lower but still above the national average. At A-level, in recent years, all candidates have passed but the proportion of higher grades has fluctuated.
190. The attainment of the majority of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Most students get off to a sound start thanks to lively, active teaching in the foreign language. They quickly become attuned to the sound of French and German with obvious benefits to their ability to listen and comprehend. Several classes in Year 7 had already covered a lot of ground in the first few weeks of French/German and showed no inhibition in answering questions in the foreign language. Average and higher attainers increase their range of vocabulary and expression throughout the key stage and begin to speak short sentences with confidence and accuracy on practised and therefore familiar topics. Lower attainers keep pace satisfactorily in listening and speaking but read less fluently and often write incorrectly. They require much repetition and consolidation work. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations and sometimes above. Average and higher attainers extend their listening and understanding skills methodically and although speaking is generally quite accurate it sometimes lacks ambition with some students not applying their knowledge beyond familiar situations. One Year 11 class in German handled typical GCSE oral questions with ease and were able to embellish the standard answer with additional information and showed sound knowledge of German sentence structure. Students have a fair grasp of basic grammar and structures and pronunciation is satisfactory and better. Lower attainers tend to make many errors in written work and their pronunciation is at times below standard. Attainment in the sixth form is average. Some students are surprisingly reluctant speakers whilst others are fairly fluent. Students complete copious amounts of good standard written work which forms a

191. Progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 is mainly good and never less than satisfactory. Progress in lessons, thanks to effective teaching methods, is good with progress clearly being made in consolidating previous knowledge and in assimilating new vocabulary and structures. Confidence grows as listening and speaking skills are rehearsed and developed. Average and higher attainers are also able to recall recent learning quite well but lower achievers need much more repetition to maintain their progress. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls in class. The progress of most students in the sixth form is good as motivated students notice and remedy their deficiencies.
192. Students with special educational needs make quite good progress in listening and speaking but often need specific help with reading and writing. Withdrawal of students breaks the continuity of their learning in foreign languages. The concentration of classroom support on one student rather than a small group is ineffective.
193. Most students sustain concentration well and show positive attitudes to learning. They work well together in paired and group work and behaviour is generally good. Many participate well in the lesson and relationships with their teachers are cordial. On rare occasions classes can be slow to settle and there is some unnecessary background chatter.
194. Teaching is predominantly good and sometimes very good. French and German are well established as the usual means of communication in the classroom although there is the odd occasion when English is used unnecessarily. Teachers work hard to make their lessons effective. They use available lesson time fully thanks to good planning and the logical organisation of materials. The pace is often challenging and tasks and activities are varied to ensure practice in the main language skills. Error marking is accurate and conscientious and homework is used effectively to bridge the gap between recent and new learning. The standard of teacher-produced materials is high. More attention to manipulating question and answer structures from the very outset and to working from authentic sources might raise standards even higher.
195. Curriculum provision is rich. Two languages are studied at Key Stage 3 and can be taken at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In addition Japanese is available in Year 12 and Spanish as part of a GNVQ course. Students benefit from extensive study trip and exchange arrangements including work experience placements in France and Germany for sixth-formers. Assessment procedures are satisfactory although students are insufficiently aware of their National Curriculum levels. The department does not currently enjoy the valuable services of foreign language assistants and library provision for the sixth form is inadequate. Peer observation by teachers would assist in further disseminating good practice. Poor acoustics make it difficult to hear in some classrooms and lack of blinds makes it difficult to use some visual aids. Modern technology such as satellite television with foreign teletext, computer-assisted language learning and electronic mail links with schools abroad, together with an improvement in the quantity of textbooks and the replacement of well worn cassette players, could enliven teaching, raise the profile of the subject and increase the level of students' interest in learning languages.

Music

196. Attainment at GCSE in 1998 was well above the national average for the proportion of grades A*-C. Results in 1999 were much lower and coincided with a lack of continuity in staffing.
197. Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is mainly below national expectations. Students in Year 9 have some understanding of musical vocabulary and the concept of arranging music, and many can play from staff notation. However, performing skills are limited and about half the students find it hard to repeat pieces accurately. Listening and appraising skills are weaker: some students can appraise their work making suggestions for improvement but others are unable to listen carefully enough without a lot of teacher

prompting. There is insufficient lesson time for every group to perform and therefore for all to receive feedback through listening/appraising.

198. At Key Stage 4, the current Year 11 have a wide spread of ability, with at least half at national expectation but a significant minority below. Students' compositions range from a sophisticated piece for violin and piano to a very simple melody over chords. Performing skills are similarly diverse. A minority of students' listening and appraising skills are above expectations, but these tend to be students who have extra-curricular instrumental lessons. Students with limited performing skills have weaker appraisal skills; often they cannot explain what they need to do to improve their performances. In Year 10, however, many students are in line with national expectations, some are above and some are exceptional in performing. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the standard of singing is poor.
199. Attainment at A-level is in line with national expectations. Students have appropriate listening, appraising and composing skills. They discuss music articulately, showing knowledge of musical history in general and the specific periods they are studying. Their performance skills are at or slightly above expectation for this stage of the course. The standard of singing is good.
200. Although students make satisfactory or even good progress in lessons due to good teaching too much time is spent reinforcing previous work before new work can be attempted with the result that progress during Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. There are similar problems of continuity at Key Stage 4, though progress here is at least satisfactory and for the higher attaining students good or very good. Some Year 10 students are making excellent progress, for example developing in a single lesson a concerto grosso performance based on a Baroque chord sequence. These students can work confidently on their own, and teachers seize opportunities to include extra activities, such as conducting. Students of lower attainment find it hard to concentrate for the long lesson span, and cannot do much on their own between lessons. In lessons A-level students make good progress, because of their level of commitment and enthusiastic response.
201. Students show interest in music, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Most students have good concentration, because teachers keep them focused, but a few boys in Key Stage 3 have poor concentration and distract others. Behaviour is mostly good, the exception being a few over-lively boys in Year 9 not disciplined quickly enough by their teacher. Students form good collaborative partnerships when composing and performing, particularly post-16. Students at Key Stage 4 and post-16 show high levels of responsibility. Year 13, for example, in the absence of a teacher on sick leave settled down quickly to work set for them. Key Stage 3 students are less confident, with some inclined to wait for their teacher to prompt them before they seek ways to improve their work. The numbers electing to take GCSE are rising, and A-level was added to the sixth form curriculum partly in response to student demand. Unusually, boys form the substantial majority of examination candidates.
202. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students are given appropriate stimulus, for example using a chord sequence they recognise as a basis for ensemble work in Year 10. Students get consistent lesson content, whoever teaches them, and the aim of each lesson is made explicit at the start. Worksheets are well planned, often differentiated at Key Stage 3, and increasingly challenging at Key Stage 4. Multiple objectives are covered, such as post-16 composing exercises which test awareness of style, structure and harmonic conventions as well as developing straightforward composing skills. Students' concentration is rarely allowed to drift too long and idle students are reprimanded. Teachers' response to students in class is a strength of the teaching, exemplified by focused questioning to identify the level of students' understanding and prompt them to think through the next step. Students of all ages appreciate the fact that the music staff can share a joke, but also insist they work hard. Marking is helpful, and particularly detailed for the A-level candidates. Teaching by

the Devon Youth Music Service provides a good contribution to the development of students' solo performing and ensemble skills.

203. Curriculum time for Key Stage 3 is insufficient, despite attempts to minimise shortage of time through smaller class sizes. It is not possible for all students to get listening and appraising feedback in every lesson, with the results that these skills are weaker in Key Stage 3 and for a significant minority in Key Stage 4.
204. The new head of department is proactive, having already improved the Key Stage 3 syllabus and started a junior choir and orchestra. Assessment procedures have also been revised, and turned from an area of weakness into a strength, with systematic procedures clearly linked to the curriculum and the National Curriculum. There has been a major musical production - the first for many years - and possibilities are being explored for cross-curricular projects.
205. Since the last inspection standards have declined but are now rising again. Accommodation on the upper school site has been considerably improved, though the largest room is a little over-resonant for bigger ensembles. The department is still poorly resourced, lacking sufficient computers and composing software for GCSE and listening resources for A-level.

Physical education

206. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students who gained A*-C grades was above the national average. Results in 1999 were much better. A-level results have been consistently above the national average over the last six years. In 1998, half the candidates gained A or B grades. Girls' attainment in examinations is better than that of boys'.
207. Attainment at Key Stage 3 exceeds national expectations. Boys and girls have good basic skills in hockey and basketball and are developing their knowledge of rules and tactics. All students understand the principles of health and fitness and many are able to warm up and stretch independently. The teacher assessment grades for 1998 show standards to be similar to those observed during the inspection. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above the national average. Many students attain high standards in football and basketball but in badminton attainment levels are below those nationally. Attainment in the sixth form is above national expectations. Year 13 students have a clear understanding of their course work requirements and Year 12 students have a good knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Some students at all key stages attain exceptionally well. They win representative honours in district and county competitions. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is similar to that reported at the last inspection, but attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved.
208. Progress in lessons is mostly sound or better. Students come to the college with little knowledge of hockey, rugby and basketball and many have a low skill level in gymnastics. They quickly learn new skills in games and begin to make perceptive judgements of each others' performance in gymnastics. Students at Key Stage 4, make sound progress overall and those in GCSE groups make mostly good progress. The progress of students who are not in the GCSE groups is limited by the low time given to physical education, the uneven distribution of class time into three 47-minute lessons every two weeks and the absence of on-site playing fields. These factors barely allow the National Curriculum requirement of regular participation in health-promoting activities to be met. Progress is clearly seen in sixth-form lessons where students build on their knowledge from GCSE and develop a deeper understanding of sports psychology. Further progress at all key stages might be made if the tasks set by teachers were more varied and all ability levels within each group were fully challenged.
209. Students at all key stages have a most enthusiastic approach to their lessons. They look smart and are well equipped for the various activities. Most students participate regularly in their lessons and have very good relationships with their teachers. Their keen interest in

the subject is shown by the number who participate in extra-curricular activities and play for community teams. There is no non-examination physical education for the sixth form. However, many sixth-formers play for college and community teams, give support in lessons and help to organise primary school events.

210. Teaching is almost all satisfactory or better. Almost one fifth of lessons are very good and one fifth are good. The very good teaching addresses the planning, performing and evaluative strands of the National Curriculum, always gives independent learning opportunities and uses questions and answers effectively. The unsatisfactory lesson seen gave no opportunities for students to work towards the end of key stage attainment targets. All teaching is well organised, students are easily managed and lesson plans are based on the schemes of work.
211. The leadership of the department is effective in the difficult circumstances caused by the split site. There is insufficient regular observation of teaching by the head of department and insufficient sharing of the very good practice between teachers that could improve the quality of teaching and provide support for the team. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. Regular assessment using clear criteria is carried out well. The low time, allocated in single lessons, at Key Stage 4, is unsatisfactory and inhibits the progress of students. This issue was reported in the previous inspection and no improvement has been made. The boys and girls changing rooms on the lower school site are in a state of disrepair and are frequently overcrowded. Some students do not have places to hang their clothes and have to change on the floor of the shower and drying areas. When arriving at their activity students often need time to calm down after the frenzy of the changing rooms. This has a detrimental effect on students' progress. The new sports hall, learning centre and fitness suite have improved the accommodation on the upper school site since the previous report. However, the playing fields are off-site and this necessitates students in Year 9 and above being taught in double lessons in order for them to have time to travel to the fields. The present timetable does not provide for this in Years 10 and 11 and students' progress is limited by this lack of access to all facilities.

Vocational subjects

212. Attainment in vocational subjects is above national expectations. This is reflected in the grades of most of the accredited courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At GCSE, results in business studies have mostly been significantly above the national average, but in child development the proportion of A*-C grades has been well below the national average and has been in constant decline. Youth Award results are above national expectations, with half of the students moving beyond bronze to silver and, in one case, gold standard in 1999. Students following the RSA text processing course at Key Stage 4 have obtained a high number of distinctions. GNVQ results in business, health & social care and leisure & tourism have exceeded national averages, with mostly above-average completion rates and a high proportion of students obtaining merit or distinction awards. All students have passed A-level economics with business over three years, thereby exceeding national averages, but A-B grades have mostly been below average.
213. Standards are below expectation on the introductory business course in Year 9 where students' work on the development of business organisations lacks depth and care, although they write curricula vitae which show careful reflection on the qualities that they could offer to an employer. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, attainment is above national expectations. At both stages, students' work is characterised by the clarity of short- and long-term aims and objectives: they know what they have to do to achieve success and to improve the quality of their work. Students plan work effectively - especially on GNVQ courses - and listen carefully to their teachers when given guidance on how to improve. They seek information effectively and are especially good at exploring the local

example, students on GCSE business courses to build a very good knowledge and understanding of issues and constraints which affect local business. Students develop good independent study skills, and can make progress in their work without over-reliance on the teacher. There is some weakness in the interpretation of data amongst A-level economists and advanced health & social care students; and across all courses at both stages, weaknesses in information and communication technology skills place limits on the research capabilities of students, and lower standards of information handling and the general presentation of work.

214. Students on the Year 9 business course generally gain a satisfactory awareness of the issues surrounding the development of a business, but a commercial bank's business plan format is too complex for lower attainers and they make unsatisfactory progress. Elsewhere, progress of students is mainly good or better. A range of courses is provided to suit students of all levels of attainment, and students plan activities carefully, setting realistic targets against which they monitor their progress effectively and are periodically checked by their teachers. The short-term nature of the targets set by lower attaining students and those with special educational needs on the Youth Award Scheme ensures that they make very good progress at Key Stage 4 and good progress in the sixth form. On all courses at Key Stage 4, the reliability and trustworthiness of students allows them to undertake stimulating fieldwork in the local community with a large measure of independence, and this further enhances progress, especially among the boys in business studies. In the sixth form, particularly in leisure & tourism and health & social care, students are well motivated to make good progress by some very clear career aspirations.
215. Students have excellent attitudes to learning. They show initiative and are prepared to take much responsibility for getting tasks completed to deadlines. These are exceptionally good qualities at Key Stage 4, and remain with the students so that they demonstrate increasing maturity and confidence as they move onto advanced and gold award courses in the sixth form. Leisure & tourism students, for example, produced work of very good standards from a field visit to tourist resorts in Austria, and they also funded the visit by appealing to the local business community with a series of formal presentations on the learning opportunities presented by the trip. Students in the sixth form work very well together in exercises like this, and they also offer each other constructive support in lessons.
216. The quality of teaching is satisfactory on the Year 9 course. It is good, and often very good, at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They have high expectations of students, especially in health & social care at advanced level where a rigorous approach produces some very high standards of work. They work hard to plan engaging activities which offer very good vocational experiences for their students, and which extend their ability to apply the theory that they study to the real world. There is, for example, good use of the Internet in economics and business courses for research and for economic simulations like the 'Virtual Economy', along with extensive use of local business contacts and links. The students' development of key skills of communication, application of number and information and communication technology is not planned carefully enough; over-reliance on students use of log books to show where they have applied these skills means that weaknesses in numeracy and information technology are not adequately addressed. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, with very positive use of praise and encouragement yielding particularly effective results on the Youth Award courses. The work of students is mostly thoroughly marked and assessed, and feedback given to students on how to improve, both orally and in writing, is clear and comprehensive.
217. The management and development planning of vocational subjects is fragmented between departments, despite the recent appointment of a senior teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating work-related learning. As a result good practice in course planning and assignment design is insufficiently shared among teachers, and the college does not have an effective system for managing the internal verification of assessment decisions.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

A team of 14 inspectors, who spent a total of 61 inspector days in college, carried out the inspection. Activities were observed (including lessons, registration, assemblies, and extra-curricular activities), and students' work. Formal meetings and informal discussions were held with students, members of staff and governors. Samples of students' work from all years and representing all abilities were scrutinised. The college documentation was examined both before and during the inspection week. The views of parents were gathered through a special meeting held before the inspection and from their responses to a questionnaire sent to all parents.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Student data

| | Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent) | Number of students with statements of SEN | Number of students on college's register of SEN | Number of full-time students eligible for free college meals |
|----------|---|---|---|--|
| Y7 - Y13 | 1527 | 79 | 224 | 97 |

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) | 92.06 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 16.59 |

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 29 |
| Total aggregate hours worked each week | 844 |

Secondary schools

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: | 74 | |
| Average teaching group size: | KS3 | 25 |
| | KS4 | 21 |

Financial data

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year: | 1998/99 |
| | £ |
| Total Income | 3,939,785 |
| Total Expenditure | 4,032,207 |
| Expenditure per student | 2,718 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 99,481 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 7,059 |

PARENTAL SURVEY

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out: | 1461 |
| Number of questionnaires returned: | 293 |

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school | 17 | 58 | 19 | 9 | 0 |
| I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my children | 24 | 59 | 11 | 4 | 1 |
| The school handles complaints from parents well | 12 | 42 | 32 | 11 | 3 |
| The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught | 10 | 54 | 18 | 16 | 2 |
| The school keeps me well informed about my children's progress | 15 | 57 | 15 | 10 | 3 |
| The school enables my children to achieve a good standard of work | 17 | 63 | 13 | 5 | 1 |
| The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons | 23 | 53 | 18 | 6 | 1 |
| I am satisfied with the work that my children is/are expected to do at home | 14 | 46 | 17 | 16 | 7 |
| The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my children | 16 | 52 | 21 | 8 | 3 |
| The school achieves high standards of good behaviour | 12 | 52 | 24 | 9 | 3 |
| My children like(s) school | 28 | 55 | 10 | 4 | 3 |

