

INSPECTION REPORT

St Paul's Catholic College

Sunbury-on-Thames

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125311

Principal: Mr Edmund Kaye

Reporting inspector: Ms Denise Lynn
1643

Dates of inspection: 31st January – 3rd February 2000

Inspection number: 184594

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the College Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
College address:	The Ridings Green Street Sunbury-on-Thames Middlesex
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Tom Stubbs
Date of previous inspection:	6 th March 1995

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-10
Information about the college	
How good the college is	
What the college does well	
What could be improved	
How the college has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the college	
How well the college is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the college	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE COLLEGE DOES WELL	11-14
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	14-16
WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS	18-21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Number of full-time students:	1050 (bigger than other colleges nationally)
Students with English as an additional language:	1.6%
Students entitled to free college meals:	9.9% (about the national average)
Students on the register of special educational needs:	8.4% (below average nationally)
Students with statements of special educational need:	2.2% (about the national average)
Students from minority ethnic backgrounds:	8.3% (mainly from Indian, African or other European backgrounds)
Average number of students per teacher:	16 (below average)

The college serves a comprehensive intake of mainly Roman Catholic students aged between 11 and 18. It has increased a little in size since the last inspection and is over subscribed for its annual intake of 180 students. Although the number of students on the register of special educational needs is below the national average the college serves the whole ability range which includes pupils with learning difficulties. The attainment of the youngest students in the college, taken as a whole, is slightly above the national average. The attainment of the sixth form students is in line with their attainment on entry.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

St. Paul's is a good college with many strengths and relatively few weaknesses. The principal and his senior management team are effective leaders who are developing a successful structure that helps staff raise standards in Key Stage 3 and 4. The college maintains a strong community of staff and students who work co-operatively with one another. Teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 is good overall and nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory. As a result the progress made by students at Key Stage 3 and 4 is good. The sixth form students make satisfactory progress but the college is not as successful in raising attainment in the sixth form as it is in the rest of the college. Expenditure per student is average. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

What the college does well

- Examination results at GCSE are rising and are higher than those achieved by similar colleges because teachers analyse what students need to do to improve their standards and what staff need to do to help them.
- The teaching is good because staff and students together create a positive climate for learning.
- The college provides a successful community spirit where good relationships help all students to develop good attitudes towards their learning.
- The principal provides calm, assertive leadership. Together with his senior management team he is successful in aiding staff improve standards at Key Stage 3 and 4.
- The principal and his senior management team use student performance information well to help the college improve standards.

What could be improved

- Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form but they do not receive sufficient challenge to help them make a marked difference to their attainment by the end of their courses.
- The new initiative of setting out students' targets and achievements in their planners is helpful to some students but often comments or targets are too general to give students a good sense of achievement.
- Information technology is not well monitored. As a result the college has no means of ensuring that all students have equal access to the broad range of opportunities available through information and communications technology.
- Although teaching is effective overall, there are weaknesses in some teachers' use of lesson time.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made good progress since its last inspection in 1995. Standards of attainment have improved. Attendance has improved. The quality of teaching is better. Most key issues identified at that time have been systematically worked on and standards in history, geography, music and physical education are all now at least in line with national averages. The college has continued to develop the ways in which it measures students' achievements and it has improved the way in which it uses those findings. All subject areas offer extension work to higher attaining students and there is good support for those students who are learning at a slower rate. The students' response in assemblies has improved and the college has undertaken a review of the way in which teachers contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through their subject planning. The college has addressed the health and safety issues raised in the last report. The college encourages the use of information and communications technology across a range of subjects and it has made great strides in working with other colleges to aid their own development through using information technology. However, it does not monitor adequately its own use of information technology and so it cannot be sure that all students have equal access across all subjects. The previous report commented that students were slow to settle in one lesson out of five. This is no longer the case although there remain individual instances where students' learning is adversely affected because they are slow to settle. Standards of literacy have continued to improve, in part because of the support given to them through good teaching of key language within different subject areas. The introduction of more mental mathematics and the emphasis on number in year 7 are helping to raise standards in mathematics. The quality of teaching is monitored systematically within departments and the information gained is used effectively to help teachers further develop their practice.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All colleges			Similar colleges
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	B
A – levels / AS-levels	E	E	E	N/A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Key Stage 3 students' results in the national tests for 14 year olds in 1999 were above the national average. They achieved particularly good results in English where they scored well above the national average. In mathematics they reached the national average for their age group and in science their overall results were above the national average. When compared with similar colleges their test results were well above average in English, above average in science but below average in mathematics. Girls have achieved better results than boys in all three subjects and Key Stage 3 over the past three years but the difference in science has been less than in English and mathematics. However, in 1999 boys did better in English and science than they did between 1996 and 1998.

GCSE results show a steady improvement and both boys' and girls' results are above the national average. They do best in art and design, combined science and drama. Boys who took sports studies did exceptionally well. Students achieved least well in religious education, modern foreign languages and history in relation to their performance in other subjects although their results in history are still above the national average.

A level results have been well below the national average for the past three years although they are steadily improving. They are in line with those predicted from students' GCSE points scores. However, the achievement of students in the sixth form is not as great as at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. The low numbers (eight students or fewer) sitting examinations in subjects other than biology, English, business studies and media studies make the results an unreliable indicator of standards in those subjects. All students taking business studies and English and 90% students taking media studies gained A-E grades whereas only 42% of students taking biology did as well. Students taking GNVQ courses do better than the national average.

Students from different minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as others. Students across the full range of ability achieve well. Students with special educational needs achieve well because most teachers adapt their teaching appropriately to take good account of their needs and the targets in their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Very positive. Students in all years see the college as a safe and friendly place where they are supported in their learning and in their personal development
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Students believe that instances of misbehaviour are dealt with justly. The majority of students are very co-operative in lessons. They are courteous to staff and are considerate in their behaviour about the college. Exclusions are above the average because of two incidents earlier in the academic year when a large number of students were temporarily excluded for bringing alcohol and drugs into the college. There has been no repetition since.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students value one another and praise each other's endeavours. Most students take their work seriously and follow teacher's guidance for improvement. The mixed age tutor groups provide older students with good opportunities to help those younger than themselves.
Attendance	Above national averages and improved on since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is below the average.

The college's distinctive ethos provides students with a strong base for their personal development. Students approach most lessons with a willingness to learn.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged 16 –18 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Satisfactory

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

The good quality teaching overall at Key Stage 3 and 4 is because teachers nearly always make sure that students are in a good position to make good gains in their learning. In nearly every lesson, the students are clear about what the teacher wants them to do and the college as a whole is successful in maintaining a climate of co-operation. Most make good use of time and students respond well to the teachers' high expectations of them. In the very best lessons in English, art, drama and science teachers ask probing questions and also allow students time to think and to develop their own ideas. In nearly all lessons teachers make at least satisfactory and often good use of the technical vocabulary of the subject to help students extend their literacy skills. Because of the co-operative learning environment students find it easier to learn good listening skills. Most, but not all, teachers check that students have grasped new ideas or remembered learning from previous lessons. Opportunities to use numbers accurately are taken in technology, science and mathematics but the use of numeracy is not as well monitored across the other subjects and there is no college policy. Teachers take at least satisfactory account of the needs of all groups of students, high and low attainers, those for whom English is an additional language, boys and girls and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall and in about a quarter of the lessons the support and challenge for students is helping them to do better than they might have expected when they started their course. However, in some otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers' do not always challenge students to think in more depth about the work or actively teach the skills that would help students take more responsibility for their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4 with sufficient challenge for students. Sixth form curriculum is being reviewed to increase the already satisfactory range of choices. The range of extra curricular activities is similar to that of most secondary colleges.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Adult support in class used well although current systems for recording progress in class need to be improved. Support for older students with literacy or learning difficulties is well matched to their needs.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Students' needs are supported from within the colleges' own resources satisfactorily in most subjects. Students make good progress over time.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The role of the college community as part of the broader community is well established. Staff provide good role models.
How well the college cares for its students	The college is very successful in its pastoral care as well as in its monitoring of students' academic development. The child protection policy is clear and staff are updated regularly on procedures.

Educational provision for all students is good. Pupils' personal development is supported well. Students report that bullying is dealt with firmly and quickly.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	The good leadership and management is based on a clear view of how to improve attainment, develop students' confidence in themselves and retain a community spirit of care for one another.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effective and fulfil their responsibilities because they are well informed and make good use of their committees. They are active in exploring how to further increase their effectiveness.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Constructive use of assessment data and evaluation of teaching and learning in helping to support college improvement and good targeting of finances. The recently implemented target setting for students is based on a good structure but it is not yet implemented consistently well.
The strategic use of resources	The college manages its budget well and its financial planning is very good. Expenditure is targeted on agreed priorities linked with raising academic standards and improving provision. A recent example is the investment in modern foreign languages to improve resources, accommodation and staffing structure. This is helping to raise standards in this area. The college systematically reviews its cost effectiveness. Its understanding and use of best value principles is good.

The principal and vice principals are well informed about college spending and have worked effectively with the governing body to make sure that money is spent effectively. The college reviews its progress systematically and uses performance data well. It seeks reasons for good performance as well as supporting those subjects where there are comparative weaknesses. It uses some helpful consultation processes to find out what key people know and do not know and makes good use of the results. It uses quality and efficiency criteria for competitive tendering appropriately.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff have high expectations of students • Staff are very approachable, show high levels of interest in their children and spend time to help them learn • Teaching is good • The college promotes positive attitudes • The Catholic ethos • The good standards of behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some would like better information about students' progress • The range of activities outside lessons • Help for students who need more frequent monitoring in order to do well • Homework is not always set as indicated in planners and some is completed in class time

Nine out of ten parents who completed the questionnaire think that teachers have high expectations of their children and that staff are very approachable. The inspection evidence supports this view and the inspectors also agree that teaching is good, students' behaviour is good and that staff and students alike have positive attitudes towards their college. The use of planners to record targets and progress is a new endeavour and as yet does not provide consistently good information to parents. It is more the case in the sixth form that help is not given early enough to students who need more frequent monitoring to do well. The range of activities outside lessons is very similar to that provided in most colleges. Homework is satisfactory but it is not always set on the nights indicated in students' planners. Most teachers plan homework but occasionally some ask students to complete work started in class. This means that faster students effectively do not have homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE COLLEGE DOES WELL

Examination results at GCSE are rising and are higher than those achieved by similar colleges because teachers analyse what students need to do to improve their standards and what staff need to do to help them

1. Students' results in the Key Stage 2 tests and assessments indicate that their levels of achievement on entry to the college are slightly above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3 their attainment in the national tests in 1999 was above the national average.
2. Students' results in English at Key Stage 3 are well above the national average as well as the average for colleges with a similar intake of students. Their results in science are above both averages. The college attributes this to teaching that ensures that students have a good knowledge of what is required of them in the first place and good feedback to them on what to do next. Their results in mathematics were in line with the national average but below that for similar colleges. The mathematics department has responded to this discrepancy by rewriting its curriculum to introduce more mental mathematics and it is re-examining classroom practice. Girls are performing better than boys in English by a greater margin than that seen nationally although in science their performance is similar. The English department has responded to the discrepancy by drafting a classroom practice action plan to help address the reasons why boys do less well.
3. Students also do well at Key Stage 4. The percentages of students obtaining 5+ A-C grades and 5+ A-G grades at GCSE has been above the national average for the last six years and the average points score over all GCSEs was also above the national average in 1999. Students' results have followed a rising trend over the same period and have improved at a rate comparable to the national trend. Girls tend to do better than boys to a greater extent than that seen nationally but boys results have also improved. The college's best results which were all significantly higher than the national average came in art, double science and drama. The college attributes these good results to the staff's own sharing of good practice, good teaching of skills and consistent evaluation of students' progress in art and drama. Standards in lessons in these subjects are high. In a year 11 drama lesson the teacher made good use of a mixture of the students' own self evaluation and the teacher's evaluation of their progress. The teacher's intervention helped the students to move on whilst the students relished the freedom given to them to plan their own work and to try out new ideas. Students in a year 11 GCSE art lesson had the confidence to take risks in their ideas and their techniques. This level of confidence coupled with very good support from the teacher underpinned a lesson where students gained a great deal of pleasure from their ability to create. Good interaction between staff and students in science aids their learning. In the lowest set for GCSE science students had developed good skills in note taking and used technical language correctly. Their good concentration was as a result of the good choice of activity by the teacher and a willingness on their own part to ask questions about their past learning about the colours of the spectrum.
4. In the sixth form the relatively small number of students following the GNVQ courses reach standards which are above the national average. Results at "A" level have been well below the national average for the past three years (see below, "what could be improved") although the average points score has risen over this period.
5. In all age groups, students of all ethnic backgrounds, those entitled to free college meals and those learning English as an additional language do equally well. Students with special educational needs achieve well against the targets in their individual education plans.

The teaching is good because staff and students together create a positive climate for learning

6. Teaching has continued to improve since the last inspection. Nearly every lesson in all key stages is at least satisfactory. Over half of the teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 and over one third of all teaching in the sixth form is good or better. In about three out of ten lessons the very good or excellent teaching enabled students to make very good progress and learn very well.
7. This picture results from a positive climate for learning where most students respond well and, at Key Stage 3 and 4 make greater gains in their learning than might be predicted when they come to St. Paul's in year 7. Mature relationships exist at all levels in many lessons and this assists the students to make good use of their time. Students preparing for their GCSE examinations in drama helped each other plan rehearsals in their own time. Students in a graphics lesson were praised for letting the teacher know that they did not understand a concept and the teacher's explanation took into account reasons why it might not be surprising if they made a particular error. Other lessons gave good opportunities for thinking about the work; in theatre and media studies in the sixth form where the teacher involved every student in some good evaluation of scenes from *The Tempest*. In a lower attaining English class in year 11, the relaxed yet highly focused session gave the students confidence to discuss quite difficult issues in modern poetry.
8. Schemes of work are good quality and, in the best lessons help staff to make good use of time to introduce a range of lively activities. In French in Key Stage 3 and 4 most lessons are managed at a brisk pace and all students are moved across a range of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities during lessons. The good use of the Assistants is helping to give small groups of students greater confidence in speaking and listening that reinforces work done in class. This is helping teachers to improve and to raise standards in a subject where past standards have been low.
9. Although assessment during lessons is not consistently sharp there is good practice. In art the sixth form students respond well to the requirement that they should evaluate their own work critically and this is linked with target setting by the teacher that is a positive support for examination preparation. Similarly, in a business studies lesson students were very clear about the amount of detail required to gain merit marks and they responded well to the teacher's challenge to use their knowledge to increased effect. Feedback to students is very good in English and also in physical education where praise has to be earned and teachers are consistent in their challenge to students to improve on their past performance.
10. Most lessons are characterised by good levels of planning which help all students, including those with special educational needs grasp the lesson's key aims. Students are usually clear about what is required in the lesson and in the good lessons why the task is being set. Many teachers, although not all, skilfully link students' previous work to the current lesson and then point the way on to what the students will achieve as a result. Because they are clear about the intended direction of the lesson the students usually prepare themselves well.
11. Most teaching promotes a reasonable level of demand in literacy, particularly to develop students' oral skills. Teachers ask probing questions in English, art and science which allow the students time to think and to develop their ideas. Teachers encourage more sophisticated use of vocabulary by helping students to extend their responses to questions. This good model could usefully be practised more widely.

The college provides a successful community spirit where good relationships help all students to develop good attitudes towards their learning

12. The good relationships within the college are very evident. The vast majority of parents and students, as well as the staff and governors, recognise this strength and say that the college is a welcoming, friendly and supportive community. A strong feature is the focus on serving and helping others that stems from what parents describe as the good Catholic ethos of St. Paul's. An assembly led by sixth form students, probed the issue of personal values and suggested to the other students that we can be judged by what we fail to do for others as well as by what we do. A member of staff paid tribute to the high moral values of some students who had found and

handed in a large sum of money. Parents comment that they appreciate the good role models of interest, care and concern that staff show for their children whether they are Roman Catholics or not.

13. The good quality of relationships helps to create an environment where students are generally keen to learn and to make good use of lesson time. Arrivals, departures and break times are orderly and friendly. Students who prefer quieter surroundings have opportunities to be peaceful, those who prefer the noisier environment of the hall manage this within sensible limits. Parents, whilst being very positive about expectations, behaviour, leadership and the quality of teaching are nevertheless prepared to speak out about aspects of the college that they believe work less well such as homework. As a result over nine out of ten parents completing questionnaires say that they feel comfortable in approaching the college if they have questions or problems.
14. Outside formal lessons the tutorial groups are made up of about five students from each year group in Key Stage 3 and 4. The atmosphere of these groups is calm and friendly. In some, the older students help younger students with their work and some assist those with reading difficulties. The mixed age groupings helps students to get to know others from outside their year grouping and this, as well as the house system, supports the community ethos. Extra curricular activities such as dramatic and choral productions also make a good contribution.
15. In lessons the teachers' expectation of high levels of co-operation from the students is nearly always realised. In physical education and in drama teachers use this feature effectively to develop good standards of team work. Teachers know that confrontation is not effective and, with only a rare exception, do not raise their voices to students. As a result classes can be bubbly but not disorderly.

The principal provides calm, assertive leadership. Together with his senior management team he is successful in aiding staff improve standards at Key Stage 3 and 4.

16. The principal and his senior team are effective in leading the college. This success is recognised by governors, staff and parents. The principal is clear about what he wants to tackle and in what order. Together with his senior managers he has worked out good strategies to raise standards. These strategies include making good use of information gained by monitoring teachers' work to identify what to do next. Governors have good quality information about the strengths and weaknesses of the college and this aids their financial decision making in particular. As a result support is well targeted and appropriate funding is made to aid development.
17. The principal and his staff are not complacent about their success. They are aware that developments are not even. They have identified the sixth form as an area where students make satisfactory progress that is in line with what might be expected. However, in the light of the way in which standards lower down the college have been raised, they are putting into place strategies to do the same in the sixth form whilst retaining the current strengths of pastoral support.
18. Senior managers work very closely with the principal and work effectively with heads department to analyse progress. Most heads of department appreciate the way in which they are informed and consulted and they appreciate the support that they are given by the senior team. However, they benefit from the clarity with which expectations and requirements are communicated. Heads of departments work out action plans to raise standards. History results, though above national averages, are lower than the other results obtained by those students taking history GCSE in 1999. As a result of this information the history department is revising its schemes of work and reviewing practice. Senior managers teach for some of the week and those observed were good classroom practitioners. Middle managers are self-critical and identify in their action planning the areas for development which will further improve students' achievements. Heads of department are expected to ensure that staff in their department share good practice. This works effectively in most subjects and it is helping to raise teaching standards and expectations of what teachers can expect students to achieve

19. The senior team systematically monitors all areas of the college so that it can target its resources well. Recently the modern foreign languages department has received especial support. Inspectors' observations support the college's predication that standards are rising in this area although some older students are making good progress from a low base compared with their other subjects.
20. Subject development plans are driven by the college development plan. Success criteria are linked to examination results. This approach has been successful in assisting the college to do better at GCSE than other similar colleges.

The college monitors and evaluates the overall performance of its students well

21. The college analyses test and exam performance thoroughly. The senior management team has a very good understanding of whether students achieve as well as they should at different ages and across the various subjects. When external test and exam results are published subject leaders appropriately analyse performance in their subject with their line managers. As a result the principal and his senior management team have been effective in helping subject leaders at Key Stage 3 and 4 to develop the teaching provision as a result of this information.
22. The college collates information from tests and teacher assessment for each student. This provides a good overview, which is used by both subject and pastoral staff to match work to students' attainments and to identify where additional support is needed.
23. Students know their own achievement levels and what they must do to improve. Targets are set for individual students in terms of National Curriculum level or examination grade. This helps many students to aim higher although some students do not yet make the best use of the information. The college uses information technology effectively to help track student progress against these numerical targets. The college is not complacent about its current level of knowledge and it is further developing its use of information technology to help refine its assessment of whether the predictions made for students' achievement are sufficiently high.
24. The recently introduced academic tutoring system provides a good way for subject teachers, tutors, students and parents to set learning targets and monitor progress. The intention to set subject targets in students' planners, which are later 'signed off' by subject teachers, is a good one which is working for some but not yet for all students (see, "what could be improved", below). In some cases, for example students with special educational needs, the student planner provides an effective system of communication between students, teachers and parents.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form but they do not receive sufficient challenge to help them make a marked difference to their attainment by the end of their courses.

25. Results at "A" level, though rising, have been well below the national average for the past three years. Girls out perform boys, particularly at the higher levels. However, the students' results at the end of the sixth form are what their GCSE points score on entry to the sixth form would predict. This contrasts with GCSE where the points score is better than might be predicted. The highest grades A/B in 1999 were in German*, French*, art*, and technology* and the lowest were in geography, mathematics*, physics*, Spanish* and physical education. Subjects gaining the highest percentage of A-E grades were art*, English, theatre studies*, French*, German*, Spanish*, business studies and technology*. The lowest percentage of A-E grades was in biology, geography, physics*, mathematics* and chemistry*. Those subjects starred had eight students or fewer taking "A" levels and are therefore not reliable indicators of standards. The relatively small number of students following the GNVQ courses achieve results which are above the national average for these courses.

26. The college has strengths in its pastoral support for sixth formers, in its communications with their parents and in the good relationships that exist between all students and their teachers. Overall, students show higher standards in their practical or creative work and in the business studies course. This is because they know more clearly what to do to improve their achievement in these areas. They have less insight into how to improve their written work in other subjects.
27. Students tend to join the sixth form because they wish to stay where they are known and with teachers that they like. They appreciate the guidance and support from the head of sixth form, they like the atmosphere in the sixth form and the chances that they are given to organise their own activities. There is a good atmosphere in nearly all lessons and, in some lessons, effective learning. Students looking at the structure of a business plan were articulate when considering the elements of the plan, knew and could apply the amount of detail to gain a merit grade and evaluated their own work maturely. All students were involved in the discussion, skilfully led by the teacher who drew on their own experience and previous knowledge expertly to help them develop their understanding further. Students taking creative subjects are often more successful because they are more confident of their basic skills. The active teaching of study skills also helps them markedly. In art the students are able to use criticism positively whilst remaining justifiably proud of the quality of their project work. This maturity, born of practice, enabled the teacher to help them criticise their work and to give them realistic practical tasks to help them move forward. Nevertheless, the sixth formers' perception is that students need more help. Some believe they are over dependent on individual tutors noticing those who are coasting so that they are helped at an early stage; this despite the six weekly progress checks by tutors and subject teachers. Some who have gained lower scores at GCSE feel demoralised from the beginning about their chances of personal development and they perceive that teachers don't always see this.
28. Inspectors noted lessons where students were not always expected and helped to be mature learners. Otherwise successful lessons in English, mathematics, science, music, history and geography were marred in part by insufficient attention in helping uncertain students gain mature learning skills. Some teaching didn't involve students sufficiently actively. In other lessons teachers accepted superficial interpretations or the immature time wasting behaviour of a minority, or gave limited support in how to remember terms and definitions. While students reach the sixth form with good learning and study skills in subjects such as English and science this is not necessarily built on sufficiently. The majority of lessons, which whilst satisfactory in that students are engaged in their work, and can concentrate well, lack the level of critical evaluation found in the best lessons. Activities may be at a brisk pace or rather leisurely but they have in common limited responses from students and relatively little exploration of the material. As a result some lessons are over reliant on the teachers' interpretations rather than the students'. There is insufficient expectation that students can think independently and therefore relatively limited classroom practice in so doing.

The new initiative of setting out students' targets and achievements in their planners is helpful to some students but often comments or targets are too general to give students a good sense of achievement

29. The subjects which have made the most improvement, such as art, drama and science, make clear to students the skills, knowledge and understanding they are challenged to develop. Equally, in the most effective lessons in all subjects students are given frequent feedback in lessons, they are involved in evaluating and assessing their own learning and are given written feedback which points out what they have done well and what they need to do to further improve. There are good examples of ongoing assessment in English, drama, art and GNVQ. This good practice should be shared more effectively across all areas of the curriculum.

30. The implementation of the system of academic tutoring is variable. Students don't yet sufficiently understand or value the recently introduced target-setting procedures. The subject targets set in student planners are mainly attitudinal and do not sufficiently relate to expected skills and understanding or how to achieve this. The approach to setting targets can be too vague, for example in technology students were asked to set more targets for themselves without sufficient time to give proper guidance to students about what they might be or how they might differ. Where target-setting was observed in tutor periods, insufficient guidance was provided by tutors to make this a useful exercise for students. Targets are set in some subjects which are not sufficiently specific, and which do not sufficiently relate to students' National Curriculum level or exam grade target. Some students' targets are checked and modified helpfully; for example, in English. However, too few teachers give specific feedback on what students do well and what they need to do to improve further or regularly 'sign off' targets which students have achieved and then set further targets for improvement in student planners.
31. Some parents say that they would like further information about progress achieved by students. Improvements to the system of academic tutoring along the lines indicated above would further improve communication with parents.

Information technology is not well monitored. As a result the college has no means of ensuring that all students have equal access to the broad range of opportunities available through information and communications technology.

32. Since the last inspection the college has established a sound basis for teaching information technology across the curriculum. The subject is taught directly in Year 7 and it is built into schemes of work for all other subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4. Curriculum leaders and heads of department are responsible for implementing these arrangements and a senior member of staff has been given overall responsibility. However, the post holder has not ensured that developments are monitored effectively. Teachers' planning is scrutinised but there is no system for ensuring that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met and that all strands of the programmes of study are being taught at the appropriate levels and according to a coherent plan across the college. As a result some students have only limited access to some of the strands of the programme of study for information technology. This is unsatisfactory.
33. The governors are in the process of advertising for the post of information technology co-ordinator. The job description includes the responsibility for monitoring.

Although teaching is effective overall, there are weaknesses in some teachers' use of lesson time

34. Most teaching is effective. Nevertheless there are some weaknesses. In some lessons, for example in history, graphics and mathematics students spend time copying work into their books at the expense of learning how to develop note taking skills and in some cases too much direction from the teacher limits students' opportunities to think for themselves. Both practices do not take sufficient account of the different levels of ability within the class. Sometimes teachers forget to share their objectives for lesson or do not check that students really understand the idea. One lesson required students to grasp the different angles from which a plan could be drawn. Some found this too hard and it took too long before the teacher discovered their difficulty because she did not ask them and they did not tell her early enough. As a result students do not get a consistent message that part of learning is being clear about the specific point that eludes them. Addressing these weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory or good lessons across the range of subjects would contribute towards raising standards further as well as helping students to become more mature learners.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The college should now:

- draft an action plan identifying the elements that will make sure that it raises students' achievements by the same extent in the sixth form as they do elsewhere in the college. The action plan should include steps to monitor that study skills are taught well by all teachers and that students play an active role in all lessons;
- ensure that teachers plan their time so that they can give consistently good guidance when helping students review achievement of their targets and in setting new targets;
- ensure that the new post holder for information technology has a clear remit to make sure, and to demonstrate that all strands of the National Curriculum programmes of study are implemented fully across the curriculum;
- address the weaknesses in teaching to ensure that all students have good opportunities to check their understanding and to develop their own ideas.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1%	24%	32%	38%	5%	0	0

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

Information about the college's pupils

Pupils on the college's roll	Y7 – Y13
Number of pupils on the college's roll	1050
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free college meals	96

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17
Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register	77

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	28

Pupil mobility in the last college year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
College data	8.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence	%
College data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	105	77	182

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70	69	67
	Girls	48	32	27
	Total	118	101	94
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	80	69	66
	National	65	60	56
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	43	39	32
	National	35	36	27

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	62	85
	Girls	36	22	43
	Total	107	84	128
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	79	67	83
	National	61	67	61
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	34	27	50
	National	30	40	30

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	94	83	177

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	50	90	91
	Girls	47	79	80
	Total	97	169	171
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	55 [52]	95 [96]	96 [97]
	National	46 [45]	91[90]	94[95]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	42[42]
	National	38[37]

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	0	N/A
	National		N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	22	37	59

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	8.1	13.4	11.6 (8.7)	4	N/A	4
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8(2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	College	9	77.8
	National		72.9

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	15
Black – other	9
Indian	14
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	684
Any other minority ethnic group	10

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	5	1
Black – African heritage	1	
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani	1	
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	60	1
Other minority ethnic groups	2	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62
Number of students per qualified teacher	17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	601

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	82%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	23.5

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	3,330,953
Total expenditure	3,243,616
Expenditure per student	3,080
Balance brought forward from previous year	145,863
Balance carried forward to next year	233,200

Parental survey

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1050

Number of questionnaires returned:

181

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	44	46	2	7	1
My child is making good progress in college.	45	41	3	6	2
Behaviour in the college is good.	36	50	6	4	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	51	4	12	2
The teaching is good.	33	53	5	4	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	41	9	19	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	52	38	3	4	2
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	35	2	4	0
The college works closely with parents.	27	49	8	12	3
The college is well led and managed.	35	49	8	12	3
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	51	3	5	2
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	46	9	10	7

Other issues raised by parents

A small minority of parents considered that some pupils with special educational needs were not supported well enough. The inspectors did not find evidence to support this view.