

INSPECTION REPORT

CITY OF ELY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Downham Road, Ely, Cambs.

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110883

Headteacher: Dr Carol Stroud

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan C Kent
3696

Dates of inspection: 27th – 31st March 2000

Inspection number: 184794

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Downham Road Ely Cams
Postcode:	CB6 2SH
Telephone number:	01353 667763
Fax number:	01353 669548
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W Harrison
Date of previous inspection:	15/05/1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Alan Kent	Registered inspector	Equal Opportunities	Standards College's results and achievements Leadership and management What should the college do to improve further?
Vanessa Marvell	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development Partnership with parents How the college cares for students
Bert Gill	Team inspector	Music	
Tony Drane	Team inspector	English Drama	
Maurice Edwards	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mick Revell	Team inspector	Science	
John Parker	Team inspector	Information Communication Technology Design Technology	
Hilary Spurrier	Team inspector	History	
Champak Chauhan	Team inspector	Geography	Teaching and Learning
Mike Lewis	Team inspector	Modern Languages	The curricular and other opportunities
John Follett	Team inspector	Physical Education	
Frances Le Pla	Team inspector	Religious Education	
Jan Martin	Team inspector	Special Educational needs	
Ian Middleton	Team inspector	Art	

The inspection contractor was:

Northamptonshire Inspection and Advisory Service (NIAS)
Inspection Division
Cliftonville School
Cliftonville Centre
Cliftonville Road
Northampton
NN1 5BW

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The City of Ely Community College is a mixed comprehensive college for students aged 11 – 18 years. At the time of the inspection there were 997 students on roll with about the same number of boys and girls. There were 130 students in the sixth form. In the last two years the number of students on roll has increased significantly and the college is over subscribed.

The proportion of students taking free college meals is about the national average, but there is evidence, provided by Cambridgeshire, that this is considerably below the number who are eligible. The college serves some areas of recognised social and economic deprivation. There are very few students who come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Students' attainment on entry has been well below the national average until two years ago. It has recently improved, but it is still below the average. The students represent the full range of attainment expected for their age. There are 250 students with recognised special educational needs, and, of these, 27 have statements.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory and improving. Strong leadership from the principal, very well supported by the governors, has resolved some very difficult challenges that have arisen since the last inspection. Managing staff reductions and seeking to develop the education provided, whilst dealing with severe financial constraints, have resulted in the college achieving sound value for money. The college operates best value principles very well.

The college has made sound progress since the last inspection and the quality of teaching has improved. Standards of attainment have varied year by year, reflecting the changes in levels of attainment of students as they enter the college. The good standards of provision for care and support have been maintained and the attendance and punctuality of students has improved.

Good quality provision is made in the sixth form, and standards of achievement are good. The sixth form is not totally cost effective because of student numbers, but both the Local Educational Authority and college governors support this provision and seek to develop this further. There is no alternative provision available for students of this age group within an acceptable travelling distance.

What the school does well

- Very good educational leadership and direction is provided by the principal.
- Good support is provided by other senior managers, and some subject heads, to move the college forward.
- There is significant good teaching in English, mathematics, drama, art, physical education, music, business education, information and communication technology, personal and social education, GNVQ health and social care, sociology and generally throughout sixth form lessons.
- Standards of achievement are good in sixth form courses, and in art and drama.
- The tutors, heads of year and key stage co-ordinators, work well together to provide good support, guidance and care for all students.
- Very good work by the governing body identifies and supports improvement and monitors success.
- Social and moral development of the students is good and actively supported by the

ethos of the college and expectations of many teachers.

- Good systems are in place to promote good behaviour and attendance.
- The support for students who have difficulties in staying in mainstream schooling is very good, and the inclusion of students who have special educational needs, and from minority groups such as travellers, is also very good.

What could be improved

- Raise the quality of teaching in key stage 3, particularly in science, history, religious education, and also lessons in modern foreign languages in key stage 3 and 4.
- Establish and pursue systems which will consistently monitor the quality of teaching across the college.
- Use assessment information and target setting to give students an understanding of what they have achieved, and direct advice on what they can do to improve the standard of their work further.
- Further develop provision to promote students' spiritual development.
- Meet statutory requirements in the provision of the national curriculum in information and communication technology, the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education, and provide a daily act of collective worship. Ensure that the Code of Practice requirements and the process for disapplication of students from the National Curriculum are fully met; and that reports to parents provide clear comment on students' attainment and progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in May 1995 standards of attainment have varied year on year, reflecting the variation in attainment of the students as they come into the college. The value that the college adds to students' attainment as they progress through the year groups has improved. Teaching and learning has improved. Attendance has risen by 3% and punctuality has improved.

The college has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and is continuing to improve. There is much evidence of well planned and coherent action driven through by a principled head, which is supported well by the governors. The issues of planning and monitoring of development objectives have been dealt with very well. This was part of a fundamental review of the whole management structure which has now been successfully put in place. Teaching approaches have been developed which enable students to develop independent learning skills and students have an increased range of opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour. The development of assessment to inform teaching and learning is not yet consistently achieved. The provision for religious education and collective worship has been improved, but still does not meet statutory requirements.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	D	D	D
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	B	

Key

well above average A

Above average B

average C

Below average D

well below average E

There are two factors which affect the standards of attainment. The college enters a significant number of students for examinations other than GCSE, which are more appropriate to motivate the students and give them opportunities to succeed. This is part of the college commitment to maintaining an inclusive education for all students. These examinations do not count in the average points score.

Secondly, comparison with similar schools is based on the proportion of students taking free school meals. Standards of attainment on entry to the college are lower than would be expected using this measure.

GCSE results have been variable over the last three years, reflecting the variations of attainment on intake. The college has set appropriate targets for its present students.

Overall, standards of work seen are sound. Standards in the sixth form courses are good. Work in music, art and drama is of a good standard, but attainment in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory. Across the college, students make sound progress and good progress in the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of students are happy and keen to attend college. Most have a good attitude to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most students have a good standard of behaviour. A small minority of students have challenging behaviour which many teachers control effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Students have good personal development. Relationships between students and with their teachers are good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Some older students attend well, as the college makes very effective learning provision for them.

The college is effective in helping students to grow and mature as they move through the year groups. It is very supportive of students who find conforming to the college ethos difficult.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is mostly good in English, mathematics, art, business education, geography, information and communication technology, music, and physical education and across all courses in the sixth form. It is excellent in drama. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs in key stage 3, particularly in science, religious education and history, and in key stages 3 and 4 in modern foreign languages.

The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, with good practice evident, particularly in English and drama. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics, with some supportive work in geography and business studies. However, the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is under-developed.

Overall, teaching was satisfactory or better in 86% of lessons observed, and it was at least good in just over half. Teaching was very good or excellent in one in five lessons.

Most students take a keen interest in their work, and respond very well in situations which challenge and involve them actively. A few students show some reluctance to work and concentrate on the tasks set. Good quality teaching engages them in the lessons and encourages them to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides an education which is broad, balanced and relevant to students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good, and it is very good for those students who have been at risk of exclusion.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The college has very few students with English as an additional language, but it provides for them well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The tutor system, college councils and the personal and social education programme all make good provision for students' personal development. Students' spiritual development needs more planned support, cultural development is satisfactory, and moral and social development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The college supports and cares for its pupils well. Support for personal development is good.

The college works hard to achieve satisfactory links with parents. However, some parents do not take up the opportunities offered to become more involved in supporting their child's learning.

Particular curriculum strength is the links that the college has with contributory primary schools and local colleges. This supports continuity and broadens opportunities. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in the provision of religious education or the teaching of information and communication technology.

The college cares for its students well, particularly in guiding their personal development. The monitoring of students' academic progress is developing, but is not fully effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The college principal provides a very good educational leadership and direction. She has good support from other key managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. The governors are actively promoting and supporting improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation of performance is generally at least sound. Target setting and actively confirming progress is a strength of the governors' work, and that of the key managers.
The strategic use of resources	Although the college is working within tight financial constraints, resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Staffing, accommodation, and learning resources are adequate. Improvements in accommodation have been particularly effective, although there is still more to be done.

Overall, the leadership and management of the college are strengths. Some subject leaders are not yet fully effective in seeking improvement and raising the quality of provision.

The college applies the principles of best value very well and has made significant changes and improvements, despite funding limitations.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel that they can easily approach the college with questions or a problem. • There is generally an expectation that students will work hard and achieve their best. • The college is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some examples of poor student behaviour. • Homework is not always appropriate. • More information is needed about student progress. • The college could work more closely with parents.

The inspection team recognises and support parents views about what the college does well.

The inspection did not identify any particular shortcomings in relation to homework.

A few students do have poor behaviour, but this is controlled in many lessons very well. Weaker teaching allows poor behaviour to affect learning in some classes.

The college could improve information about student progress, particularly in comments made in reports.

The college does try to work closely with parents. It is responsive to parents' questions and comments. However, some parents do not take up the opportunities that the college provides.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 When students enter the college, their previous attainment, as shown by national curriculum test results and other nationally based tests, is below the average expected for their age. When compared with all schools in Cambridgeshire, the attainment of students on entry has been well below the average for the County. In the last two years, the level of attainment was better, but was still below the national average. These levels of attainment match those which were observed in lessons.
- 2 The judgements of attainment when compared with similar schools, based on free school meals data, do not match to the college recorded data. The level of attainment on entry is lower than that expected from this comparison.
- 3 At the age of thirteen, students have made generally satisfactory progress and the results of the national curriculum tests are in keeping with those attained at the age of eleven. There is a good improvement in a number of subjects, but this is not secured in science, modern foreign languages, history or information and communications technology (ICT).
- 4 The results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) show a more marked improvement. Although the overall results are still below the national average, many students attain better results than might have been expected considering where they started from at the age of eleven. Attainment is particularly raised in English language and literature, mathematics, art and drama. Overall, students have made at least satisfactory progress.
- 5 In the sixth form standards of attainment are good. Those students who do Advanced level GCSE make good progress and attain higher levels than might have been expected in relation to their previous examination results. Students who take the vocational qualifications also attain good standards.
- 6 Students on the college's special needs register achieve well. By year 11 most of these students achieve one or more GCSEs, and in addition they achieve a wide range of alternative national accreditation at good levels. Students who have difficulties in conforming with college expectations nevertheless achieve a good range of GCSEs and other accreditation through the support of the Re-Integration Centre. Other minority groups, such as students with English as an additional language, or travellers, attain well by the end of year 11.
- 7 The college has set appropriate targets for GCSE improvement following detailed consideration of the known previous attainment of students. This has generated individual student targets and collective targets for the College. A particular challenge is identified as raising the average points score for all students. The college is making sufficient progress towards its targets. In the last three years, the trend for improvement has not risen in keeping with national trends but this has been affected by variations in intake attainment. The number of students gaining 5+ A* - C moved from 28% in 1997 to 40% in 1998 and was 37% in 1999.
- 8 The average points score of students is reduced by the college policy to enter candidates for examinations other than GCSE. These examinations are more suitable for the students and they achieve high grades. This is seen to be a more positive achievement than gaining a low grade at GCSE. However, the alternative examinations do not carry any points to add to the average points score.

- 9 In English, starting from a below average level of attainment, students achieve results in national curriculum tests at key stage 3 which are just below the national expectation. At GCSE the language results are close to the national average, and those students who take literature separately attain results which are above average. Advanced level standards are good and often exceed expectation for individual students.
- 10 English and drama lessons develop literacy skills well. There is a high priority to develop basic skills, and emphasis on reading and writing is supported through work in the Learning Resource Centre and the use of information and communication technology. Oral work is also well developed. The work on literacy across all subjects in the college is currently being developed.
- 11 In mathematics, students make steady progress starting from below average standards. Although standards remain below the national average by the time that students take GCSE, many attain higher grades than might have been expected. Results at advanced level also show a better grade than might have been expected judged by the student's grades at GCSE.
- 12 Standards in numeracy are sound. Although good practice occurs in most mathematics lessons, and there is some supportive work in other subjects, such as business studies and geography, there is no co-ordination in place across the College.
- 13 Standards in science improve as students go through the College. They are weakest in the first three years in both the national tests and in lessons. At GCSE, there is an improvement in standards of attainment, although results still fall short of the national average. Recent results have been close to the national average, but boys tend to underperform. In advanced level studies, students attain at a level expected from their previous examination results.
- 14 In modern foreign languages attainment in national curriculum tests and GCSE are below national averages. Generally they are not as high as would be expected for students when considered against their performance in other subjects. Results at advanced level have been consistently good.
- 15 Students attain standards in geography which are mostly in line with national expectations at the end of key stage 3. GCSE examination results have improved and were above the national average in 1999. Results at A level in 1999 were good; all students passed, with just over half the grades being at A or B.
- 16 In history, attainment at the end of key stage 3 and in GCSE is below the national expectation. The most recent results at GCSE were lower than those achieved in the previous two years. Standards in the A level course are sound and in line with the national average
- 17 Standards in religious education are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Not enough time is given to the direct teaching in years 10 and 11 to enable students to reach satisfactory standards.
- 18 Students perform at levels expected in physical education, with some individual high standards being attained. Standards in the sixth form are also sound, and good for those students taking the advanced level course.

- 19 Overall, standards in information and communication technology are sound in some aspects of work, particularly in handling and communicating information. However, the elements of controlling, measuring and modelling are not dealt with thoroughly enough and this brings standards down to below expectation after three years. In years 10 and 11 standards remain below national expectations as the provision made is limited and dependent on subject choices.
- 20 Students have levels of attainment in line with national expectations in design and technology and GCSE results are in line with national averages across the range of courses on offer.
- 21 High standards are developed in art, music and drama. Attainment develops well over the course of five years and many students, in these subjects, attain commendably good GCSE results.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 22 The college provides a climate where the vast majority of students are happy, and keen to attend College. Students can consistently display very good or excellent behaviour and attitudes to work in departments where best practise was observed, such as in English and Drama. Students express a desire to do well in examinations, maintain concentration and have good listening skills. In most classes, especially in key stage 4, behaviour and attitudes are good, with students showing respect for others. However, in departments where the challenging behaviour of a minority of students is not controlled it impacts on others and denies students the basic right to work. Noisy, disrespectful behaviour with students showing poor concentration and an inability to work independently are unfortunate features of lessons in science, religious education and modern languages, and parents share concerns in these areas.
- 23 Behaviour in the sixth form is very good.
- 24 While the level of fixed term exclusions has doubled in the past four years, reaching a peak last year and now falling, the rate of permanent exclusion has dropped dramatically. This is largely due to the success of the Re-integration Centre, where disaffected students, and those at risk of becoming disaffected, can benefit from extra support. This is a strength of the College. Some students acknowledge that they would not still be at the college were it not for the opportunities and support given to them in the Centre.
- 25 The response of students with special needs in lessons is sound. Where lessons meet individual needs, they can be very positive about learning. For example, year 10 students in English answered questions on a play enthusiastically. The students in the Re-Integration Centre are particularly positive about the learning opportunities they receive, and they appreciate the opportunity to learn to manage their behaviour. These students become disinterested in learning only when there is little encouragement to succeed, planning is not matched to individual needs, and when clear behaviour expectations have not been set by the class teacher. Most students with special needs behave satisfactorily. Within the learning support centre students with special needs relate well to each other, and they make very good use of staff to support personal and social difficulties. Relationships within the Re-integration Centre are excellent.
- 26 Although there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes and after college, (Subject clinics, Drama, Music and Sport), the 'take up' for many, notably music and sport is less than might be expected. Many students do take advantage of the after college homework club held in the Learning Resource Centre and transport is arranged for those who live at a distance.

- 27 Relationships with teachers are generally good and very good with tutors and year heads, where a high level of care and concern for students is shown. There is liaison with Highfields Special School for year 11 GCSE drama. The level of maturity shown in this successful integration of students, the attitudes to each other and the abilities of the college students to take the initiative, where appropriate, make the liaison project a model of good practice.
- 28 During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying or racism. On the rare occasion when bullying occurs, students have the opportunity to talk things over with older students. This is recognised by the students as being part of the good effective support provided by the College.
- 29 Where the opportunity for responsibility is given, students respond well. Year 8 students assist well in reception on a daily rota basis, and year 11 students act as prefects in a mature and caring way. Students share responsibility for college development through year group and college councils.
- 30 Attendance levels have risen since the last inspection. Attendance is judged to be satisfactory, given the college's policy of social inclusion and that there is a high incidence in some years of students with long term absence who still appear on roll. There is a higher than average incidence of absence due to illness and there are a few occasions where otherwise unauthorised absence is being condoned by parents.
- 31 Students are punctual in arriving at lessons. This has been helped by the introduction of travelling time between lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 32 Overall, teaching was satisfactory in 86 per cent of lessons inspected and it was at least good in just over half. Teaching was very good in one out of five lessons; occasionally, it was excellent. Teaching was mostly good in the sixth form and generally satisfactory at key stage 4. The unsatisfactory or poor teaching occurs mostly in particular subjects, such as science, history, and religious education in key stage 3 and in modern foreign languages in key stages 3 and 4.
- 33 There is a direct causal relationship between the teaching and the quality of students' learning. Students' learning, and their progress, were satisfactory in eight out of ten lessons inspected, being at least good in half. The unsatisfactory or poor teaching has a concomitant effect on the learning.
- 34 Teaching is mostly good or very good in English, mathematics, art, business education, geography, GNVQ health and social care, information and communication technology, music, physical education, personal social and health education and sociology. Teaching in drama is excellent.
- 35 The very effective teaching and learning includes the following strengths.

- 36 Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and they use this well to enhance students' knowledge and understanding. In English at A level, for example, teachers use their knowledge well to ensure that students understand potentially difficult texts, while in year 13 geography, students are given good knowledge of the conflicts facing less economically developed countries as they strive for sustainable growth. In mathematics, teachers are very knowledgeable about examination requirements. In art, there is particularly good use of photography and the work of other artists. In drama, teacher knowledge is excellent, often inspiring and challenging students. In an excellent year 10 lesson on creating a narrative following the reconstruction of a village and the lives of its inhabitants after a bombing raid, the teacher created a powerful dramatic presence through the introduction and narration between improvisations. There was excellent use of the convention of "thought tapping" within the improvisations, allowing students to show considerable skill in developing and sustaining roles within the ensemble piece. Students were very well disciplined and exercised great self-control. They took their work very seriously and, as a result, there was a significant depth of emotion to their improvisations. Moral dilemmas were explored in great detail. The skilful entry of the teacher in and out of the drama enabled very effective interrogation and enabled students to make excellent progress.
- 37 Lesson planning is thorough, meets the needs of all abilities, and provides learning outcomes that are shared with students. In a very good year 7 practical music lesson, on xylophones and glockenspiels, good teacher questioning provided students with links to their previous learning. They were keen to participate and showed good understanding of the work already covered, including the competent use of technical vocabulary. They performed single melodies with a high degree of accuracy and managed to maintain their pace of learning. The teacher had high expectations and constantly offered encouragement and instilled confidence through positive support. She used a clear outline of the composition task, using questions and answers well to confirm students' understanding. There was good use of periodic sharing of ideas to ensure good pace and progress in learning. Students made good gains in their understanding and performing, including the performance of their own compositions. They were achieving above national expectations, and the teacher concluded the lesson effectively with a summary for the next lesson.
- 38 In an excellent year 8 mathematics lesson on making a box from a single sheet of A4 paper, the teacher had rehearsed the idea well with students beforehand so they knew what had to be done. They understood what a tabular format meant and as the lesson progressed they had good appreciation of the nature of the task, what needed to be done and what was to be produced. The teacher organised the students extremely well and timed activities so that the pace in learning could be maintained. Students began to understand how to find the volume of a cube, and although several were slow to make connections using decimals, once they did they moved rapidly to the interpolation of quadratic fractions. They were attaining well above the average, with many being curious and very excited by the tasks set. Their behaviour was excellent.
- 39 Many teachers manage students well, some of whom often display challenging behaviour. In a low ability year 11 science lesson on making posters about the electromagnetic spectrum, for example, the teacher kept very calm and used good humour in the face of unpredictable behaviour by some students. This prevented awkward situations from escalating. In a year 8 geography lesson, the teacher used friendly but firm approaches with some potentially disruptive students.

- 40 The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The special needs staff have a good understanding of individual needs. Teaching in the Re-Integration Centre and of the vocational courses is good. Most subject staff can identify the students needs, but adequate planning for meeting such needs is weak in subject areas, including that of the special needs groups in years 7 to 9. There is insufficient use of additional resources to enhance students' learning, including the most effective use of multi-sensory aids, information and communication technology and the use of support staff. Homework is not a regular feature in most subjects for students with special needs.
- 41 Overall, the setting of homework for others is regular and generally appropriate. It extends students' learning but does not always promote their skills of enquiry and investigation sufficiently.
- 42 Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, or poor, particularly at key stage 3, the following aspects had shortcomings: teachers' planning; the effectiveness of teaching methods; and the use of time and resources. As a result, students were not acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding, and their pace of learning and their rate of progress were adversely affected. Teachers do not have robust systems for assessing students' work in classes, with the result that students are not always aware of their own learning, especially at key stages 3 and 4. Some teachers also have problems in managing students behaviour, such as in science, history, modern foreign languages and religious education.
- 43 In a poor year 7 history lesson, about students constructing their own medieval castles, the lack of learning objectives meant that students did not know what to do at the start. They had learned very little accurate information about castles despite this being the fifth out of six lessons. Students struggled with basic terminology, such as keep, bailey, motte and battlement. They had little sense of chronology and were unable to say when castles were built or how they changed over time. Many of the models they had constructed were based on imagination rather than fact. There was poor learning in the lesson, as groups of students wandered around, not sure of what to do next.
- 44 In an unsatisfactory year 10 French lesson on hotels and facilities, the teacher outlined clear objectives but these were not explained to the students. The teacher's expectations were low; the pace of the presentation at the start was poor and repetitious. Blurred images on the overhead projector and errors on the worksheets did not help this. Students maintained their attention, but showed little enthusiasm during the repetition of key words. As the lesson continued, they were copying work and filling-in gaps in the worksheet. The GCSE coursework that students were asked to do was very simple, and they had poor knowledge of their own performance and of examination requirements. Their exercise books had not been marked for many weeks. Their overall standards were below average and they made little progress during the lesson.

- 45 Across the curriculum, the teaching of literacy is sound overall, although the whole college literacy strategy is still emerging. There is evidence of key vocabulary being highlighted during specific topics in some subjects. There is wide variation in writing standards on students' entry in year 7. However, in those subjects that encourage extended writing, such as English and history, students make at least sound or often better progress. English is the main subject to have implemented a coherent literacy strategy by allocating a literacy hour each week in year 7. English schemes of work are also being reviewed to teach more effective reading and writing skills. The teaching of students with special educational needs is also being informed by current developments of the National Literacy Strategy and promotes well the literacy competency of the less able students. Standards of speaking and listening develop well across the years, particularly in those subjects that emphasise well-managed group work and collaborative learning. Drama plays a significant role in developing speaking and listening skills. The college development plan contains appropriate literacy targets, but these are not yet being fully addressed by all teachers.
- 46 The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is, on the whole, underdeveloped. Numeracy skills are taught well in some subjects, such as geography and business studies, and the teaching of numeracy in mathematics is good. There is no whole-college policy to direct this development.
- 47 Teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory in 75 per cent of lessons inspected and good or very good in about one third. However, significant weaknesses still remain at key stage 3.

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

Curriculum

- 48 In most respects, the quality and range of the curriculum are good, providing an education which is broad, balanced and relevant to students' needs.
- 49 In key stage 3, the college offers a broad range of experience, including a second foreign language and business studies. The allocation of time to individual subjects is satisfactory, with the exception of religious education (RE), where shortage of time inhibits the delivery of the locally agreed syllabus. There are no specific information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, and the cross-curricular arrangement which has been covering most elements of the subject does not guarantee full coverage of the required programme of study.
- 50 In key stage 4, a satisfactory range of subjects is available. Alongside the usual GCSE courses, good alternatives such as the Youth Award Welsh Board and other Certificate of Achievement Courses provide less academic routes of study. Insufficient, specific time is allocated to religious education in order explicitly to cover requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Physical education (PE) is allocated a low amount of time for its 'core' course, and GCSE studies are only accessible by attending lunchtime and after college lessons. This is being changed next year to include GCSE physical education in the main timetable.

- 51 There is no separate time allocation for ICT in key stage 4, and although an audit has been carried out to establish the extent of cross-curricular delivery, no formal curriculum arrangement exists. There are insufficient clearly identified opportunities to use ICT in a broad range of subjects. The options that some students take may narrow and unbalance their education; history and geography are both optional, allowing students, if they wish, not to experience this area of study.
- 52 In the sixth form there is a broad range of courses, including A Level subjects, general studies and a growing representation of GNVQ options, which cater for academic and, increasingly, vocational needs. A very small element of religious education is offered within the general studies and tutorial arrangements, but not enough to meet requirements.
- 53 Measures to ensure equality of access and opportunity are for the most part good. Most students have access to the full curriculum in key stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form, students have good access to a range of options. There is a small number of students in key stage 3 who do not study a modern foreign language, without formal procedures for disapplication being followed. An unusually high number of students do not study a foreign language in key stage 4, not always because they have a profile of low attainment.
- 54 Most students with special needs have good access to the whole curriculum in years 7 to 9. In years 10 and 11 the college provides a good vocational and work-related curriculum, linked to the New Start programme. This includes access to a very good range of link courses at local Further Education Colleges, and to local voluntary group activities, such as allotments, and fitness building. Students with poor literacy skills on the special needs register are withdrawn for individual tuition, and students who experience exceptional difficulties in lessons are provided with individual time-tables to meet their needs, supported by the learning support centre or the Re-integration Centre. Support in subject areas is not always used effectively to ensure access to learning for students with more pronounced special needs.
- 55 A strength of the college is its emphasis upon inclusion. This has ensured that many students at risk of permanent exclusion have remained in the college and are set to achieve well at the end of year 11, through the provision of the Re-integration Centre. The recent links with the special school on the same site have produced, in a very short time, some very impressive examples of curricular access and enhancement for students in both the college and school. For example, students with severe learning difficulties join the year 10 drama group, and English. Support for travellers ensures that they feel an included group within the College. Through the good work of the Community Tutor, disadvantaged students and their families are supported through initiatives such as study centres and family learning groups. An audit of provision for the gifted and more able students has ensured that subject areas provide a range of extension opportunities.
- 56 Whole-college strategies for teaching literacy are being developed. There is a good literacy programme within English and drama lessons, notably in year 7. Numeracy is well developed in mathematics lessons, but the impact on the whole curriculum has so far been limited.
- 57 There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities on offer, at lunchtimes, after College, at weekends and during holidays. They contribute positively to students' personal, intellectual and physical development, but numbers attending the sessions are often low. The many opportunities to attend subject-related sessions which support learning across the curriculum are a strength of the college's provision. There are musical events, theatre visits, which are very popular, and a growing number of sporting events.

- 58 Provision made for personal and social education (PSE) is good. Delivered within tutorial sessions and through some science lessons, it offers all students a planned programme which includes teaching about health, drugs misuse and sex education and elements of citizenship. The focus in the sixth form on preparing students for the next stage of their life, whether it be further education or the world of work, is particularly good. New schemes of work have been developed and the provision is well co-ordinated.
- 59 Students receive careers advice and education of good quality. This includes careers interviews with an external adviser, careers sessions delivered within the PSE schedule by form tutors, and a successful and well co-ordinated work experience programme in year 10. Career choices are well informed by a resource library and access to computerised information.
- 60 The college fosters sound educational links with its local community. Local business people visit to mentor students. External contributors add to the relevance of the PSE programme. The Youth Award Scheme and GNVQ students extend their learning into the local community. In history lessons, students use the cathedral and the river as part of their local studies programme.
- 61 Relationships with local schools and colleges, and in particular the close curricular links with the nearby special school, are very good. The college works with the colleges of further education in providing vocational courses. Curricular, social and cultural liaison with nearby contributory schools is good.
- 62 The college has made sound progress in improving its curriculum since the last inspection. Insufficient progress has been made in allocating an appropriate amount of time to religious education.
- 63 The college meets nearly all-statutory requirements, but because of insufficiencies in provision for religious education and ICT, and because some students are not properly disapplied from a modern foreign language in key stage 3, curriculum arrangements are not fully satisfactory.

Spiritual development

- 64 The provision made for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. In addition, the college does not provide enough opportunities for students to take part in collective worship. All students attend one assembly a week in their year group. Year assemblies are well organised and focus on a clear theme such as 'making a difference'. Opportunities for collective worship within assemblies are not taken, as students are not invited to consider their own response to the theme through personal reflection or prayer. Other opportunities for collective worship arise through reflection on the 'thought for the week' during form time, but these are not utilised consistently across the college.
- 65 In key stage 3, all students have religious education lessons, which provide opportunities for spiritual development and reflection. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own views of God and to reflect on important times in their own life. The lack of provision of sufficient religious education for all students in key stage 4 and the sixth form means that many opportunities for older students to consider issues related to personal beliefs and values are lost. Occasionally, in some subjects such as personal and social education, there are good opportunities for spiritual development. In a year 8 lesson a presentation by a visiting speaker encouraged students to reflect on the 'spiritual side of life'. Insufficient attention has been given to the provision for spiritual development in other subjects. Opportunities to reflect on the spiritual dimension offered in the topics covered are often missed.

Moral development

- 66 Provision for the moral development of students is good. They have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Teachers and other adults provide effective role models. Fund raising activities provide good opportunities to consider the needs of others. Every year, students successfully raise funds to support local and national charities such as Children in Need and an appeal to provide equipment for a local Paralympic Cyclist. Within the Re-integration Centre, good opportunities are provided for students' moral development. Opportunities to explore moral perspectives are evident through the personal and social education programme where topics such as bullying and relationships are covered. In history, when the Holocaust is studied, students are encouraged to consider the moral and ethical issues raised. Moral development in other subjects is implicit rather than explicit. For example, the emphasis on playing by the rules in physical education.

Social development

- 67 Arrangements to promote the social development of students are good. Students have the opportunity to work in class in a variety of groupings and they respond well to this. The student council provides a good opportunity for students in all years to exercise responsibility and develop their understanding of citizenship through involvement in discussions about ways to improve the college. Students in year 8 and above can take responsibility by volunteering to do duties around the college. Many students in year 11 volunteer to become prefects and this gives them the opportunity to both work with adults and mix with younger students. Joint projects with Highfields Special School provide good opportunities for social development.

Cultural development

- 68 The college makes satisfactory provision for many aspects of students' cultural development, including extra-curricular activities in English and the arts. Theatre and dance workshops and concerts offer opportunities for cultural development. Other opportunities are offered through art visits to the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery and theatre trips.
- 69 The previous inspection reported that the college did not prepare students well for life in a multicultural society. The college has worked hard to increase the range of opportunities available for students to appreciate the richness of other cultures. In English, music and art lessons, opportunities are taken to use examples from a variety of cultures. In modern foreign languages, students had the opportunity to learn about life in Japan through working with a Japanese student. Other activities, such as a visit by the Kathakali Indian dance group, provide opportunities for students to attend workshops and learn about other cultures. However, the college could still do more to prepare students for life in a culturally diverse society.
- 70 Since the previous inspection, the college has developed a policy statement on how it seeks to promote students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The policy is not yet embedded across all areas of the college and this means that provision is uneven, as it is not planned into all schemes of work or monitored.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 71 Students at the college enjoy a safe and caring environment, with encouragement and entitlement to work in most lessons. Matters of health and safety are well monitored by the health and safety committee who do regular risk assessments and deal with problems identified by them, or any other members of the college community, in order of priority and as swiftly as the budget permits. Any concerns which represent a danger to students or staff are dealt with immediately. A concern of parents and students is the state of some toilets. The college has attempted to address the problem by 'dedicating' the toilets to different year groups. The college accepts that this has not been totally successful and still remains an area of concern for students, especially in the lower year groups.
- 72 Child protection at the college is very secure with a high number of staff having received full training and all staff know procedures well. Designated teachers have been identified, trained and are known to all staff.
- 73 The monitoring of pupil's academic performance is still developing. There has been progress since the last inspection for students in key stage 4, but the procedures for assessing pupil's attainment and progress are generally under-developed at present. Changes are proposed in the new development plan and some departments such as mathematics and English have good procedures in place, but only English is making use of assessment to guide curricular planning. The procedures in place for monitoring attainment and progress for students with special educational needs are adequate, but again insufficient use is made to positively impact on planning. Not enough opportunities are given for students to discuss their progress and attainment with teachers.
- 74 Students benefit in pastoral terms from having the same tutor and year head from years 7-11. Additionally, students in year 7 are allocated a 'form prefect' who will act as a confidant should the need arise. There are good opportunities for students to discuss confidential problems with support staff.
- 75 Students feel secure that there are people at the college with whom they can share concerns. A valued mentoring system has been put in place to help students with problems, including behaviour or underachieving. Some students have benefited from having mentors from a cross section of industry and this increases students self-confidence. The sixth form centre, which is apart from the main building, functions very much as a 'stand alone community' where good academic guidance is given and students have good pastoral support. The benefits of students acting as role models for the main college occurs frequently where they share activities and resources with other students.
- 76 The college has recently initiated new procedures to ensure good attendance. The year heads work closely with the educational welfare officer, who spends two full days a week at the College, to identify problems with absenteeism. New procedures include the phoning of parents on the first day of unexplained absence. This started last term, targeting a year group at a time, but now more resources have been made available to enable a dedicated member of staff to monitor absenteeism consistently, on a daily basis, across all year groups. The Re-integration Centre is a positive incentive for some students to stay in college.

- 77 The assessment of students with special needs is sound. There are good systems for identifying and assessing students, including the gifted and more able, and students with English as an additional language. Students on the special needs register have Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which are reviewed regularly by all staff. Students supported by the Re-integration Centre have individual behaviour plans, although these do not yet conform to the requirements of Pastoral Support Plans. However, the use of assessment to guide planning for students with special needs is unsatisfactory. The Annual Review arrangements do not comply with Code of Practice requirements, in reporting on progress towards targets, or in recording disapplications. Targets in IEPs are unspecific and unsystematic in planning progress in learning and behaviour. Whilst most staff have access to IEPs, use of these to inform planning in subject areas is rare. Progress towards IEP targets is unrecorded, apart from that associated with individual literacy skills teaching.
- 78 The college provides very effective support and advice for students with special needs, both from staff within the learning support centre and Re-integration Centre, and through the work of external support services. The outreach work makes a significant contribution to the welfare of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The work of the community tutor is also playing an important part in both initiating and supporting projects which provide additional care and opportunities for students who are in difficult circumstances.
- 79 Behaviour is monitored by year heads and the key stage co-ordinators who regularly meet and discuss individual student's behaviour. Concerns generally come to their notice via the use of referral forms. The high degree of care has been maintained since the last report. Good use is made of the sanctions outlined in the college guidance policy, with assignments, detentions, and ultimately exclusions. The Re-integration Centre plays a big part in offering an alternative for students whose behaviour would otherwise warrant exclusion.
- 80 Merits which lead to certification, and sometimes to prizes, are used to promote attendance, effort and behaviour. Though a huge incentive when students first start college, they are less valued by older students who perceive that they are not awarded consistently.
- 81 Students state that any instances of bullying that have arisen have been dealt with swiftly and effectively, and are secure in their knowledge of who to confide in should the need occur.
- 82 The induction programme for students joining the college is very good, with productive liaison and a three day induction visit for new students. The need for more curriculum liaison is recognised and a successful in service training day took place in January where teachers from the five main contributory schools came and shared schemes of work. Good practice takes place in science, where a project is started in year 6 and finished in year 7 which allows for continuity and promotes students self-confidence.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 83 The majority of parents are satisfied with the education the college provides, though a few express concerns at the college's GCSE results when compared with national averages. Parents have an opportunity to put their views forward by way of a questionnaire, which is sent out by the principal each year, and the results are used to inform the college development plan. The college has a home/college agreement, which was initiated by the college before it became mandatory, to explain to parents the importance of their roll in the education of their child. Each student has a personal diary, used principally to record homework, which is signed by parents and checked each week, involving parents in their learning. College policies are in the booklet as a constant reminder for students and parents. The diaries are also used to record sanctions and rewards, providing an effective way of informing parents about students' behaviour and attitudes at college. There is a high profile annual Presentation Evening each year, to which parents are invited, which celebrates achievement.
- 84 The college provides a high quality prospectus, which is professionally produced and covers all aspects of college life. The Governors Annual Report to parents fulfils all statutory requirements, but it does not give a full financial report detailing how the local authority grant is used. The college newspaper 'Outlook' is excellent in its presentation and gives a 'taste' of college life and this, along with numerous letters from the Principal keep parents adequately informed. The Parents, Friends and Staff Association supports the college well, by arranging social events for the students such as the ever popular discos.
- 85 College Reports on students' progress, sent out once a year, are less than satisfactory in content. The records of achievement (ROA's) are well presented and easy to read, but the standard of reporting differs not only from subject to subject but also within departments. In best practise, attainment and progress are reported with appropriate targets set. However, in some subjects reports are not fully meeting statutory requirements in reporting on progress and attainment and there is a failure by the college to report on information and communication technology and on religious education at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Some targets set are not useful enough, and there are no procedures to review targets except in English where they are widely and effectively used.
- 86 Parents and students complain that they do not have a copy of the report to keep and this results in students and parents forgetting their targets, thus limiting the involvement parents have in their child's learning. Parents are invited to interviews once a year and generally nearly two thirds take this opportunity to discuss their child's academic progress. Students with special educational needs receive regular and appropriate information, but the Annual Review progress reports are general and do not record progress on targets. Parents are actively encouraged to attend review meetings, with the college making special arrangements, when necessary, to ensure it happens.
- 87 Overall, the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college, despite initiatives from the college which have met with some apathy, is less than satisfactory.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 88 The college principal provides very good educational direction and leadership. She has good support from other staff with important management roles who have settled well into newly defined areas of responsibility and accountability. The leadership and management activities have moved the college forward well since the last inspection, and further progress in raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning is clearly identified and expected in the Development Plan.
- 89 The governing body plays a very effective part in supporting and promoting improvement. They have a clear and secure understanding of what needs to be done next. They have also dealt effectively with difficult challenges over the last four years, for example, in managing major staffing reductions. Together with the managers of the College, they have a very strong commitment to the aims of the college to serve the whole community.
- 90 Monitoring and evaluation of progress towards well-defined targets is generally at least satisfactory. It is good where governors are very active in direct involvement in the college, and with staff, in defining and confirming progress. The monitoring of academic progress has been developing well, with the use of performance analysis to set targets for both students and staff. This is not yet giving sufficient clear guidance to students about what they need to do to improve or reach their targets. There is some good practice but it is not consistent across all subjects.
- 91 The monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of teaching has been a key activity for the principal and some of the senior staff. Whilst there is substantial evidence that this has raised the overall quality of teaching, there is more still to be done. In some subject areas, observation of teachers by the subject leader is having a measurable impact on quality. However, in other subjects there is insufficient consistency of approach or understanding of the need to work together to achieve improvement.
- 92 To move this forward, the governing body has discussed and approved a good performance management document which defines policy and provides a framework to achieve clear and consistent practice and accountability.
- 93 The management of staffing, accommodation and resources has been an important challenge in the last five years. The principal and governors have worked very effectively to manage budget difficulties which were caused by a large deficit, and funding levels which are low in comparison to other similar schools. Considerable, effective, staff restructuring put the budget back in balance. Very effective use of limited resources has enabled substantial improvements to be made in many areas of the college, including science. There is still more to be done, and plans are in hand which should lead to improvements in the design and technology area and the mathematics suite.

- 94 The college is in an area of developing housing, and the Local Education Authority has required the college to accommodate growing numbers of students. These increased numbers are not yet fully achieved, and this has decreased the efficiency of staff deployment. In addition, both the Local Education Authority and the college governors are committed to maintaining a good range of sixth form courses. There is no alternative for students within easy travelling distance. This is also decreasing the efficiency of staff deployment and causing some demands on the main college budget. As a result of these two factors, the college is facing another deficit budget, but this situation is being very well-managed by the college, together with the Local Education Authority, to achieve a good financial outcome in the next two or three years.
- 95 This situation illustrates how well the college, and its key staff and governors, are working to achieve their aims within severe constraints. It is an example of good financial and development planning over the short, medium and long-term. Very good financial systems and controls are in place, and the work of the Bursar and other support staff is a key contributory factor in this difficult, but well-managed situation.
- 96 There is a good match of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. In science there is now a more settled team and interim staffing measures in modern foreign languages are approaching resolution. There is a high proportion of relatively new staff and the college has established a comprehensive programme to support their induction. This meets the requirements for newly qualified teachers and is beneficially extended to other new teachers. Arrangements for the continuing training of teachers have progressed slowly since the last inspection, with insufficient evaluation of its success in the classroom and lack of past rigour in supporting college development priorities. For example, further training in behaviour management is required.
- 97 The college has a strong team of support staff in most areas including administration, premises and technical support for practical subjects. These provide effective back up to technology subjects, information and communication technology and science, for example. Training opportunities for support staff are limited by availability and many of them do not feel up to date in their knowledge and skills. There are good developing arrangements for reviewing the working effectiveness of many of them. There is an appropriately qualified team of learning support assistants working with students with special needs.
- 98 Learning resources across the college are adequate and the Learning Resource Centre is a very good example of applying resources in a planned way to meet the needs of improvement in teaching and learning. This is both effective and efficient, and an example of the application of best value principles.
- 99 Both governors and key staff understand and apply the best value principles. This has enabled considerable progress and improvement to be made, despite the financial difficulties that have arisen. Another significant example of this is the way in which arrangements for caretaking, cleaning and maintenance of the college buildings has been re-organised. The governing body have achieved much better value and this has resulted in significant improvements in the college buildings and the learning environment in many parts of the college, despite limited available funds.
- 100 The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities in accounting for the performance and improvements of the college.

- 101 The overall leadership and management of the college is good. There is a clear commitment to continuing to improve, despite financial restraints. There is a good capacity to achieve further significant gains across all aspects of the College.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 102 In order to achieve further improvement, the senior managers of the college and the governors should;

improve the quality of teaching, particularly in key stage 3 in science, history and religious education and in key stage 3 and 4 in modern foreign languages by:

- better planning of lessons to meet individual needs;
- using information from student assessment in planning lessons and setting clear learning objectives;
- making better use of time and learning resources in lessons.

(Paras 32,42,43,44,136,137,180,181,205,236,237)

Develop the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by subject leaders in order to increase their skills in leading improvement by:-

- providing a clear process which involves all subject areas, taking account of the time required to do this;
- ensuring that suitable training is provided for all staff;
- sharing good practice that has already started in the college.

(Paras 91, 92, 96, 111, 128, 139, 167, 185, 240).

Further develop assessment procedures in order to:-

- set clear targets for students in all subject areas;
- ensure consistency of good practice across all subjects;
- use the information gained to share with students what they need to do to improve;
- better inform parents about the progress of students in reports.

(Paras 73,85, 86, 123, 153, 166, 177, 185, 196, 217, 228, 239).

Develop further the provision for students' spiritual development by:-

- identifying opportunities in the curriculum which will provide students with the chance to reflect more deeply and more often.

(Para 64, 65)

Take steps to meet statutory requirements in the provision of the full national curriculum in information technology and the agreed syllabus in religious education. Ensure that requirements for the disapplication of students from the curriculum are fully met. Provide reports to parents which meet requirements in all subject areas. In addition, provide a daily act of collective worship.

(Paras 49,51, 53, 64, 85)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

188

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	14	36	32	9	4	1

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	867	130
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	106	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	250	-

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	66	81	97

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	24	31	19
	Girls	58	45	36
	Total	82	76	55
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	57 (53)	52 (56)	37 (58)
	National	63(65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	15 (25)	25 (30)	14 (28)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	40	38
	Girls	59	56	36
	Total	89	56	74
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	62 (60)	66 (75)	67 (72)
	National	64 (61)	64 (62)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	29 (26)	22 (32)	38 (38)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (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
		99	87	76

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	32	67	76
	Girls	29	65	71
	Total	32	132	147
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	37 (40)	81 (79)	90 (91)
	National	45 (46)	90 (91)	94 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.8 [33]
	National	36.7 (37.8)

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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	24	91
	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	14	29

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
School	19	16	17 (14.5)	1.6	3	2.5 (2.6)
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	School	22	100
	National		N/A

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the Percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	-
	National		-

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	5
White	981
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese	1	
White	72	1
Other minority ethnic groups	4	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	466

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.21
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.3
Key Stage 4	23.4

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2225230
Total expenditure	2278944
Expenditure per pupil	2300
Balance brought forward from previous year	82551
Balance carried forward to next year	28837

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	997
Number of questionnaires returned	265

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	21	63	9	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	26	53	15	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	45	23	9	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	54	22	9	3
The teaching is good.	12	64	13	3	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	13	43	31	12	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	34	53	8	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	37	51	9	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	14	48	23	9	6
The school is well led and managed.	22	50	12	4	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	19	61	11	4	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	52	9	4	13

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

ENGLISH

- 103 Students enter year 7 with attainment below national expectation, with a significant minority having insecure literacy skills and special educational needs. Diagnostic testing of the current entry indicates just over a quarter of students have a reading age two or more years below their chronological age. In 1999, the results in national curriculum tests for students' aged 14, at level 5 and above and level 6 and above were below national expectation. Teacher assessment at the end of year 9 places students close to the national expectation. Bearing in mind the attainment on entry, students make satisfactory progress. The department adds value over key stage 3, providing a good foundation for key stage 4 where the results are satisfactory overall. This is evidenced in the general growth in extended writing, increased accuracy and improved presentation from year 7 through to year 9. Current standards of work are sound or better, as evidenced by lesson observation and scrutiny of students' work, with top sets being challenged well. Students with low attainment make good progress with basic literacy skills through effective support and schemes of work which have been modified appropriately.
- 104 At key stage 4, students demonstrate good standards of work, with written work of appropriate length, improving accuracy and presented well. In the 1999 GCSE English examination the students attained close to the national expectation at grades A*-C and above the national expectation where all those entered achieved grades A*-G. A significant minority, who are not entered for GCSE, concentrate on attaining well in the Certificate of Achievement. All those entered passed with nearly half the entry achieving a distinction or merit. In the 1999 GCSE English Literature examinations, the majority of students achieved A*-C grades, albeit on a reduced entry, with all those entered gaining grades A*-G. These results represent good progress over the two key stages. The results also exceed those predicted through key stage 3 data analysis. The department planning identifies the need to continue to challenge students to attain at the national expectation, with specific focus on the more able and on raising boys' attainment.
- 105 In the sixth form, standards are generally good, with students often performing above prediction in the A level examinations. In 1999 GCE A level Literature all students achieved grades A-E, with top grades being gained by the more able. The department also has a very good record in achieving A*-C passes with students re-sitting GCSE English.
- 106 On entry, students have a range of literacy competence. A significant minority enters the college having difficulties with reading skills and accuracy in writing, however, the more able have good basic literacy skills. The department has implemented a literacy hour lesson per week in year 7 and has customised schemes of work to be accessible for all abilities. Literacy skills are advanced well over key stage 3, with students quickly developing more extended writing, improving accuracy and good presentational skills. Good use is made of ICT to enhance and present work. A literacy policy is being implemented which is co-ordinating the work of other departments in supporting the development of literacy skills.

- 107 Standards in speaking and listening develop well and are good in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The emphasis that the department places on collaborative learning and sharing work is a key factor in the effective development of oral skills. There is considerable emphasis placed on both developing reading skills and encouraging enjoyment in reading for information and pleasure in key stage 3. Library skills are developed well. Written work improves quickly in key stage 3, though is not always fully secured by the end of year 9. However, the advances in length, accuracy and quality provide a good foundation for the work at GCSE. Standards of written work seen during the inspection indicated good standards from the more able with at least sound work from the majority. Those students with special needs make good progress over key stages 3 and 4.
- 108 The quality of teaching is good in all lessons and often very good. The specialist team provides security over the curricular content, with all teachers demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of effective teaching strategies. There is also considerable examination experience, which contributes significantly to good outcomes in key stage 4 and the sixth form. In key stage 3, teachers are developing the basic literacy skills well through the literacy programme in year 7 and the content of the well-written schemes of work. Planning is strong, both for schemes of work and for individual lessons. A good feature is the modified curriculum for the less able. All teachers demonstrate high expectations of behaviour and commitment and, as a consequence, manage students very well with minimal misbehaviour. Teaching in key stage 4 and sixth form lessons is characterised by teachers having aspirations for their students, which is appreciated and responded to by the majority of students. The teachers are effective practitioners, using whole class teaching as well as collaborative group work. The development of appreciation and critical reflection is encouraged well through requiring students to present work to the class and to read out written work. For example, this was shown at the beginning of the year 8 lesson when three students read out their choice of poems to the class and one girl, who read *The Stolen Child* by W. B. Yeats, creating an emotive atmosphere with the reminiscence about her grandmother reading it to her.
- 109 The relationships between staff and students are good, with teachers valuing the contributions students make to the lesson. They work hard to get students to have confidence in their ideas, and take pains to be clear with instructions. Lessons are well paced, with appropriate time lines to activities to ensure there is a sense of urgency about the learning. Resources used are of good quality and appropriate for purpose. For example, the use of photocopied letters by David Tinker from the Falklands War and the copy of a First World War letter from a commanding officer to the parents of a dead soldier, analysed in a year 7 lesson to explore tone and attitude. Assessment is a very good feature of the department's work. During lessons, teachers are good at giving verbal feedback and support while work is in progress. All teachers mark and respond to students' work at length, giving encouraging and formative comment on work. The targets set, and the effective pupil self-assessment process, give students a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Sometimes the targets are embedded within the formative comments, which can obscure the priority rather than highlight it, as in the most effective practice. Homework is set, marked and returned appropriately.

- 110 The vast majority of students have very positive attitudes towards their work in English. They generally remain on task, frequently showing interest and enjoyment, as shown in the *Romeo and Juliet* lesson in year 8 where the students were enthusiastic in making preparations for their well-researched, creative group presentations. They concentrate well and generally take trouble to present their work effectively; often using information and communication technology to enhance the appearance and layout of their work. Overall, the students rise to the challenge set by the teachers and by course demands. Examination groups in key stage 4 generally want to do well at either GCSE or the Certificate of Achievement. In the sixth form, students develop mature attitudes to their studies and a growing enthusiasm for the texts, as in the year 13 lessons where students showed considerable competence and appreciation of the work of the poets under scrutiny. They also develop a confidence in their ideas and they are able to give well-structured personal responses to what they read. The behaviour in lessons is good and often better, owing to the good discipline and experience of the teachers and the good quality relationships with students. Where students become off-task or talk inappropriately, teachers quickly bring them back to the learning. Students develop personal skills well. For example, through emotional engagement with characters and dilemmas within texts, and through the discussion of moral issues while examining the actions and motivations of characters. Also they develop social awareness by honing their social skills in collaborative group work and the analysis of social issues, as in the year 10 lesson where students were exploring critically the issue of football hooliganism. They gain a broad experience of both traditional and multicultural aspects of cultural life, through the texts studied and the good range of extra-curricular activities such as theatre trips and visiting writers.
- 111 The head of department is providing very good leadership and management to the well-organised department. There is a commitment to English across the whole team, with effective systems and schemes of work being implemented. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with appropriate time being allocated to the development of basic literacy skills, oral work, reading and writing. ICT is appropriately encouraged within the constraints of college provision, however, there is the capacity and enthusiasm for developing this aspect well within English. Good monitoring systems are in place, though lesson observation of the team by the head of department has yet to be secured. Development planning is secure with appropriate targets for the future direction of the department. Overall, the work and ethos generated within the English department play a significant part in delivering the college's aims. Staffing and resources are good, while the accommodation is advantageous in that it forms an English suite, there is a need, however, for refurbishment of the rooms and landing. The area contains attractive displays which celebrate the work of students well.
- 112 Since the last inspection the department has made good progress in those areas which were deemed to be in need of improvement. There has been a marked increase in the amount of pair and small group work used by the team. This is an area of some strength, which is appreciated by the students. Assessment is now much more secure, with consistent, effective marking by the whole team. Pupil self-assessment has been developed well, with very good examples seen in the sample of work. Standards of attainment have been improved in GCSE English Literature. Despite the lower entry, those that enter achieve very well. In the light of these improvements and the high quality of teaching seen during the inspection, the department clearly has the capacity to continue to improve standards.

DRAMA

- 113 The standard of drama work, especially that created in key stage 4 and the sixth form, is a strength of the college. Students enter the College, however, with a wide range of drama experience. The three-year key stage 3 course provides a programme of skills development, and students acquire a repertoire of conventions for use when exploring drama topics. The overall standard of attainment achieved by the end of year 9 is at least sound and often good. The work done in key stage 3 provides a good foundation for those going on to take GCSE Drama.
- 114 At key stage 4 standards of work are very good in both year 10 and 11. Students can produce high quality improvisations and sustain roles very effectively. In the 1999 GCSE Drama examination students achieved well above the national expectation, with three-quarters of the entry gaining grade A*-C passes, and all students gaining A*-G grades. These results are achieved from a higher than average entry. Students taking GCSE Drama consistently perform well and there is good value added over the course. The course at GCSE, and at A level in the sixth form, provide very good opportunities both for independent working and challenge for the most able.
- 115 In the sixth form GCE A level Theatre Studies course standards of work are very good, with students showing considerable maturity and commitment. The entry on the course varies from year to year and results reflect the ability of the candidates. Results, however, are good and represent good added value against GCSE data analysis.
- 116 Drama is an inclusive subject and in key stage 3 all students in the college take drama for one hour a week. Many students with learning difficulties gain considerable success and confidence through their work in drama. This is seen particularly well in the close liaison that the department has made with Highfield Special School. Each Thursday, year 11 drama students work with students from Highfield who have a range of disabilities. For example, during the week of the inspection City of Ely students ran the warm-up and drama sessions with great confidence and skill, involving all students and staff in the drama activities. The college plans to take a number of Highfield students into next year's GCSE group. This provides a model for liaison, as well as contributing excellently to the personal growth of City of Ely students, while providing challenge and enjoyment to those from Highfields.

- 117 The standard of teaching overall is at least sound, often good and has excellent features at GCSE and A level. At key stage 3, teaching is generally good and there is appropriate development of basic drama skills and discipline. This process takes time, but by the end of year 9 most students understand the requirements for drama to work and they are prepared well to start GCSE. Teacher knowledge and understanding of drama techniques is good, with the head of department being particularly experienced with examination work. The course content is stimulating and relevant to the experience and interests of the students, for example in year 9 students are exploring the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy. There is good use made of the teacher in role technique, as seen in the year 7 lesson where the teacher took on the role of Robin Hood and guided the drama, as well as operating within role. The technique was also used effectively with teacher as narrator in the year 10 lesson on a community surviving disaster, where students sustained a demanding ensemble role-play excellently for a lesson. Indeed, the use of a wide range of teaching methodologies is a strength of the department. Teachers are able to adapt the course of the drama and respond to students' ideas. Over key stage 3, teachers make explicit high expectations of behaviour and commitment, and by key stage 4 and in the sixth form they have an assumption of maturity and seriousness about the drama work which the students live up to. Lessons are paced well with a range of activities, and there is generally an opportunity for showing finished work or work in progress. From year 7 students are encouraged to reflect upon their work and the work of their peers. This is an excellent feature of GCSE and A level work, and closely linked to the department's assessment process. Teachers make good use of lighting and equipment to develop an appropriate atmosphere within which the improvisations are developed.
- 118 Students respond to their drama lessons with enthusiasm and increasing seriousness of purpose. From a position of variable drama experience on entry, students quickly develop positive attitudes, which mature effectively as they move through the college. Behaviour is generally a very good feature, and where there are instances of lapses in concentration in key stage 3 teachers deal with it appropriately. In key stage 4 and the sixth form, behaviour is excellent, with very good commitment to producing work of intensity and high quality. The ethos created within drama lessons is one of trust and sensitivity towards others, where students frequently show real appreciation of the work of their peers. Drama also is a key subject for the personal development of students. Improvisations often develop moments of emotional intensity and empathy with the predicaments of the characters involved. This aspect of spiritual development is a strength of the department. Drama is driven by the tensions surrounding moral decisions and personal dilemmas and, in their resolution within the drama lesson, students act out valuable life experiences. The emphasis on collaborative and co-operative working provides a very good opportunity for socialisation and a forum for developing sensitive critical responses to the work of others. While the subject does not use very much scripted material, except some usage in the A level course, there is very good provision of trips to theatres and in-college performances and workshops. The examination groups provide college productions such as *The Crucible* and *For Their Country's Good*, and an annual pantomime 'toured' round the local primary schools.

- 119 The head of department is providing principled and highly creative leadership to the subject. There is excellent commitment and enthusiasm for the subject within the drama team, which is captured both within the handbook's documentation and the practice within the lessons. The aims of the college are fostered very well, particularly in the areas of self-understanding, self-motivation, building confidence, developing creativity and sensitivity to others. Schemes of work are in place, which contain a rich programme of experiences and activities. The key stage 3 programme provides a good foundation for developing basic drama skills, and the requirements of the GCSE and A level syllabuses are covered effectively. Drama has access to two good studio spaces, though the smaller studio lacks adequate ventilation. They are well resourced with lighting grids and sound systems.
- 120 The previous inspection report on drama was very brief and very positive. The high standards described have been maintained, as has the department's capacity to enthuse students. Key successes are the high quality of teaching and the above expectation examination results. Drama is at a point of growth and there is a good capacity to continue to improve.

MATHEMATICS

- 121 The work of the Mathematics department is improving. Students enter the college with attainment below that expected nationally from the 1998 tests at age 11. At age 14, the 1999 tests indicate a small added value, but results are still below expectations at level 5 and 6. Improvements continue and, at age 16, the GCSE results reflect this. The number of A*-C passes is still below national averages, but the A*-G passes are slightly above. The success rate is very good with the Certificate of Achievement taken by a small number of students in year 11. In the sixth form A level courses, the 1999 results were lower, as anticipated. The small number of candidates, combined with a reduced qualitative intake, restricted the higher attainment scores. However, the department has addressed the issue in a rigorous manner. A new A level course has been introduced which is more closely tailored to student requirements and staff expertise. There are now systematic procedures in place to identify student needs and provide additional, appropriate support. This is reflected both in the work sample seen and attainment in lessons. In both, standards achieved were at the national expectations and, in several classes, above. Attainment across the different strands of mathematics are also sound, with better than expected achievements in using and applying mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory. Students with special education needs make sound progress and are well supported in the special needs programme. Progress in all years is now satisfactory.

- 122 Numeracy is sound. Although good practice occurs in most mathematics lessons, there is no whole college numeracy policy and no co-ordination across other subjects. The department is aware and knowledgeable about the National Numeracy Strategy. Students entering this year will already be familiar with the improved focus on oral and mental mathematics. The department is aligning its curriculum to ensure a better continuity, but the provision of a whole school policy, based on the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy, is now needed. In mathematics lessons, most students are confident to calculate both with and without a calculator. Graphic calculators are used efficiently in the sixth form. Teachers place a high value on students being able to recognise which arithmetical process to use in tackling computations. Decimal, fraction and percentage calculations are understood and most draw and interpret graphs correctly. Oral and mental calculations are a feature of most lessons, and aspects of number are well represented in the wall displays in several classrooms. In other subjects the skills and knowledge are less well developed, and errors occur. In design technology, many students measure correctly, but several are not confident to handle fractional parts in food technology. In science, all students display information in tabular and co-ordinate form. These are not always correctly drawn when students are investigating relationships using discrete or continuous variables.
- 123 By age 14, in number and algebra, in addition to good mental calculation skills, many can form simple equations from problems in words and solve them successively, using algebraic notation. Confidence is growing, especially amongst the girls, to talk about how this is done. Students use practical materials to demonstrate the development of algebraic ideas. Not all are yet confident in this work. In space and shape, they know the properties of geometrical shapes and use them effectively to create patterns and write Logo programmes using computers. In data handling, high attaining students are able to work out an estimation for the mean using grouped data, and apply summation formulae correctly. In using and applying mathematics, almost all students can identify a range of strategies for starting investigations. They are confident to use the language of mathematics in writing up activities. Several are able to draw out generalisations from the results of their solution to given problems. Skills and understanding in all these areas are extended and, by age 16, the majority of students understand and know what they are required to demonstrate at the different levels of entry for GCSE. They know their target grades. For example, a class targeted at Grade C in year 11, were working through the syllabus requirements, defining the skills and knowledge required. Not all appreciate the high rate of study required to achieve these grades. In A level classes, by the end of the pure mathematics module, all students can evaluate compound probabilities and know how to determine definite integrals by applying substitution using natural logarithms.
- 124 A year 11 class was working through a past examination paper. The teacher had highlighted the marks that could be achieved from successfully completing a certain number of questions, and these formed the target for the lesson. Most students worked productively, knew their grades and could interpret what this meant in terms of sustained work throughout the time available. Despite good advice from the teacher, a few students did not seize the opportunity to make good progress through the set tasks. This affected their achievements in the lesson.
- 125 Attitudes and behaviour in mathematics lessons are mostly good. Students want to talk about their work, and relationships in classrooms are good. Many realise the need to work hard to achieve good results and do so. However, in some lessons a small number of students do not see the urgency to sustain their work. Progress and attainment suffers. The department should ensure that productivity for all students is maintained at a high rate.

- 126 In the majority of lessons teaching and learning are satisfactory. In over half the lessons it is good or very good and there are several examples of very high quality teaching. In a very small number of lessons, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and complemented by precise knowledge of syllabus requirements. This enables accurate student target grades to be predicted. Planning is good, although objectives for learning, and a range of teaching approaches, are not always indicated or used. Where teaching and learning are at their best, the work set is demanding, progress vigorous and sustained, and attainment above that expected. Students present their own mathematical ideas to the class or group. Both teacher and students share excitement of the mathematics taught and learnt. The tasks set are seen as relevant and important, and engender a high interest. Mathematical thinking and debate is highly valued and used effectively to promote learning. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, students' gains in learning are poor; the pace is slow and there is little variety in the methods used.
- 127 The curriculum meets legal requirements and is balanced across the required areas of work. Assessment is regular and accurate and recorded against national curriculum requirements. A well-supported number of lunchtime and after college clubs enrich the curriculum. High attaining students are targeted through one of these lunchtime activities, but are not always well catered for in classes. The department is successful in using specific curriculum material, designed to develop mathematical thinking and discussion skills. Most students know their target grades in GCSE classes, but are less sure of national curriculum levels at age 14. Not all students know what mathematics skills and knowledge are required to improve their performance.
- 128 The management of the mathematics department is good. The guidelines for effective teaching and learning, planning lessons and using appropriate resources to challenge all levels of attainment, are good. They are not yet in practice in all lessons. There are very good plans for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. These are strongly supported by a member of the senior management team, but again, not yet in place.
- 129 The accommodation is satisfactory and considerably enhanced by very good displays that stimulate mathematical and numerical thinking. They range from exemplar pieces of work from students, including GCSE course work projects, to the fascination of Origami and unusual number facts. There are several which encourage students to design and improve aspects of their classroom.
- 130 The department has made improvements since the previous inspection. There are good strategies to raise attainment and improvements in variety of teaching styles. These improvements are not in place in all classrooms. Training provision is improved and should continue, especially in relation to the imminent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy.

SCIENCE

- 131 Many students receive a lack-lustre science education. Recent turnover of staff, and an unacceptable level of poor teaching, contribute to low expectations, poor attitudes and under-achievement by a lot of students.

- 132 In the 1999 tests for 14-year-olds, the proportion of students achieving level 5 or more, was well below the national figure. This is also below the results achieved by the same students in English and mathematics. Girls' results were slightly below boys'. Over the past four years there has been no trend for improvement in these results. GCSE results have shown an improvement trend over the last four years, with 40% of students gaining higher grades in 1999, compared with 48% nationally. The college enters a higher proportion of students than nationally and the average result for 16 year olds in the college is just above the national figure. Results are weakest at the very highest grades (A*, A and B); this is particularly marked in boys of whom fewer are entered and there is a longer tail of under-performance.
- 133 Numbers taking A level science exams fluctuate, but are usually small. Results in biology and physics have tended to be below the national averages and chemistry above. When compared with their starting levels of attainment, students often demonstrate satisfactory levels of achievement. Over the two years of A level, students starting with relatively modest GCSE results make satisfactory long term progress and achieve in line with the national picture. In chemistry value added has been better.
- 134 Although students start at the college with below national average results in science, this does not explain their unsatisfactory progress. Over the three years they achieve only about two years' worth of value added. Students with special educational need often do not make sufficient progress, being held back by lack of appropriate provision. Talented students are not sufficiently stretched early in their careers. Over the two years of GCSE, satisfactory progress is made in comparison with national value added, although in 1999 students still tended to be achieving better in their other subjects than in their science GCSE, particularly the boys.
- 135 In lessons, standards of achievement at key stage 3 are currently below those expected nationally, with some year 9 students learning to use the pH scale to measure acidity and others explaining how the changing appearance of the Moon is caused by the way we see the light reflected by its surface. This is more typical of year 7 or year 8 achievement elsewhere. Similarly, the ability to investigate scientifically is under-developed. Standards seen in GCSE classes are closer to, but still below, those expected for their age, as shown by upper set year 11 students when using physics formulae to calculate the kinetic energy of a moving object. A level students are currently achieving standards at or near those expected for the course.
- 136 This under performance at key stage 3 is the combination of three interconnected factors: the curriculum, teaching and students' behaviour. The teaching programme lacks coherence and does not systematically develop scientific ideas year on year. There is insufficient guidance about learning objectives or teaching methods, particularly for less experienced staff. The teaching of this age group is too frequently unsatisfactory. It often lacks stimulation that engages students' interest or the demand to raise students' aspiration. Students' behaviour is often challenging and their attention spans short. When they are expected to listen to long introductions at the start of the lesson, they quickly lose interest and many become troublesome. Where teachers' behaviour management skills are weak, this is exploited by the students, particularly in some of the larger classes. In the worst cases, the lessons degenerate into unproductive noise and grudging, plodding, low level work.
- 137 The teaching varies widely between very good and very poor with most being sound. However, about one quarter of lessons are substandard and this makes teaching unsatisfactory overall. Only in the sixth form, where there is no poor behaviour to contend with, is the teaching always satisfactory or better.

- 138 Below the sixth form, attitudes to science are often poor. Students show too little interest, poor attention to teachers or other students' contributions and little scientific curiosity. A combination of intolerance of uninspiring teaching, frustration with the disruption of others' behaviour and a history of turbulence and lack of continuity in teaching staff, has produced an ethos of low expectation, under-performance and dislike of science amongst students. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching is dynamic, attitudes and behaviour are good.
- 139 The recent major changes in staffing partly contributes to a lack of consistency in the department. However, a lack of management systems, such as well developed schemes of work, assessment procedures, evaluation and effective support of teaching also contributes to this lack of cohesion. There is not a full central database of assessment information, nor a sufficiently rigorous analysis of test and exam results to diagnose areas of strength and weakness. Development planning and health and safety are areas of better management, but overall the department's ethos for learning is well below that of the majority of the college.
- 140 There is ample laboratory accommodation, but damaged blinds, harsh acoustics and variable quality of display, result in many of these rooms being an austere learning environment. Shortage of textbooks and equipment often hinders the smooth organisation of lessons. The resources are efficiently managed by a very competent technician team to help minimise the effects of these shortages.
- 141 Progress has been poor since the last inspection, with insufficient improvement at key stage 3, no overall improvement in the quality of teaching and a deterioration in students' behaviour and attitudes to learning. There has been improvement in the laboratory accommodation and an upward trend in GCSE results.
- 142 There are many shortcomings in the work of the science department that need to be rectified, but the most urgent priority is to improve the ethos for learning in science and to raise students' expectation. This requires the improvement of teaching through the use of a variety of more engaging tasks, better management of students' noise and behaviour and improving the long term planning and lesson planning at key stage 3.

ART

- 143 Students enjoy the range of experiences in art and the way in which teachers welcome them into their work. Results are generally in line with other schools, with exceptional work achieved in photography and in the sixth form where students make significant gains in creative confidence. The presence of art across the campus contributes positively to the environment.
- 144 At key stage 3, the majority of students are achieving the expectations of the national curriculum in both 2- and 3-dimensional work. At key stage 4, GCSE grades are consistently close to national averages but well above for photography. Boys and girls do well in relation to their performance in other subjects at the college. All students following 'A' Level options in the subject consistently succeed with grades in the A-D range.
- 145 Work which develops from direct observation is a strength of work in years 7 to 9. Where this is developed further through reference to artist's work, consistently good results are achieved by all abilities, for example in year 7, where students have progressed pencil and pastel studies into collages after studying the later work of Matisse. It is also evident that students succeed particularly where they are taught to develop work by following a process, for example in year 9 where portraits have progressed into skilfully constructed ceramic heads and well executed prints.

- 146 The quality of investigative evidence when researching artists, or showing experimentation with art techniques and concepts, is variable and the use of sketchbooks is an area for development.
- 147 GCSE work, which involves a clear series of stages, succeeds well. Students following the photography option, for example, interpret given themes by combining observational and technical skills creatively. Where a purpose is clear, results are also consistently good, for example the music poster designs. At this level, students need to develop and apply analytical drawing, observational approaches and critical skills regularly. The broad range of possible interpretations to the theme sometimes distracts some students from the opportunity to progress key subject skills.
- 148 'A' Level work becomes characteristically confident in scale, colour and technique as students pursue their ideas throughout the course. Where personal studies have clearly connected to student's own work, creative risks have strengthened their personal style. For example, the work of a ceramics student was enriched by her contact with a local artist. Where individual interests and concerns are expressed, their work is also strengthened, for example, a photography student used his knowledge and experience of the stained glass in Ely Cathedral as an opportunity to interpret filtered light and shadow. Several students were also consciously applying knowledge and skills developed in other A level studies. The life drawing experience has positively contributed to the progress of all students.
- 149 Students' attitudes, values and personal development are generally good. They enjoy contributing to the relationships for which staff and sixth formers are good role models. Opportunities to continue with work at lunchtimes and after college are popular. Different age and ability groups are able to work co-operatively together. Students particularly value the supportive structure of the teaching and the trust with which they are increasingly treated.
- 150 A small minority of students observed, particularly in year 10, find increasing responsibility challenging. The personal investment made by students in their option needs more frequently to match the high commitment of the teachers. The themes which are encountered at key stage 4 do not readily ease students into more self-supported study.
- 151 Teaching of art is good overall, with a satisfactory standard frequently observed in key stage 4. Some very good teaching is characterised by particularly effective organisation of materials, projects and processes which enable the teacher to focus specifically on supporting individual progress.
- 152 All teachers of the subject flourish in one-to-one exchanges with students, and this has particular effect at sixth form level, where a depth of dialogue and understanding is apparent. The range of teachers that students encounter builds on this strength. The use of sessions at the end of lessons to involve all students in learning from individual successes and problems has the potential to further raise the effectiveness of teaching.
- 153 Good knowledge of individual students contributes to the most effective teaching. For example, a year 9 ceramics lesson provided specific, targeted support for a group which was accurately perceived as ready and capable for additional challenge. A willingness to take creative risks with new ideas was observed in a year 8 lesson where students were invited to make card sculptures of human structure. The teacher's determination to prove the idea created an exciting sense of discovery from which the students clearly benefited.

- 154 While many informal opportunities exist for teachers to share their work, there are no structured opportunities for the subject leader to feedback observations, and thereby enable transferable skills to be more consistently shared. The role of homework, use of specialist vocabulary, clarity of specific art teaching objectives are examples of inconsistency.
- 155 Students experience a wide range of learning opportunities at key stage 3. They acquire evident skills where demonstration is used. Displays in the department and across the college campus also enable students to recognise qualities to aspire to.
- 156 A limitation of the key stage 3 course is access to original art, artefacts and artists. A mask-making project, observed in year 8 for example, made appropriate visual reference to masks from different cultures, although the lack of a handling experience restricted their learning about meaning and purpose by questioning the scale, form, colour and construction through first-hand experience. Gallery visits provide important learning experiences at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, including an exchange opportunity with Holland.
- 157 The art history course at A level provides a useful example where students have analysed key characteristics associated with artists, rather than a focus on chronology. This has potential to improve self-evaluation at all levels. Assessment criteria also need to reflect the requirements of the national curriculum and examination objectives, in order to help students identify specific areas in need of improvement, and increase self-esteem, by knowing clearly where their strengths are.
- 158 Capable, sensitive and supportive subject leadership has enabled satisfactory progress across the areas identified in the previous report to be addressed. The strengths now apparent, which have earned popularity with the students, can be built upon further by:
- developing investigative and analytical research skills into artists and art methods, by consistently addressing the role of sketchbooks and ICT;
 - promoting continuity and progression by identifying key objectives for the subject and planning for their development between projects, years and key stages;
 - and relating assessments to objectives and involving students in taking increasing responsibility in those areas identified which would enable further success.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 159 In design and technology, students benefit from a broad curriculum experience. They enjoy their work in the subject and achieve sound standards.
- 160 Recent statutory teacher assessments for the attainment of 14 year olds were in line with those recorded nationally at level 5 and above in 1998, but below in 1999. These results were not, however, subject to moderation. At age 16, recent results in the GCSE examinations in the design and technology subjects overall were in line with the national average.

- 161 At age 14, the attainment of current students is in line with expectations. From ages 11 to 14, students are making sound progress overall, developing a foundation of basic knowledge, skills and understanding within food, graphics, resistant materials, systems and control and textiles. When designing, students use design briefs to guide their thinking, develop specifications for their products, undertake research and propose a range of ideas using suitable graphic techniques. They propose outline plans to develop a clear idea of what has to be done. For example, in food in year 8, students plan how to make their own pizzas. They organise the ingredients and their work areas, and work carefully and safely to produce a range of successful products. When making, students use a good range of tools and equipment with increasing confidence. For example, in textiles in year 7, students block print designs onto fabric and develop hand and machine construction techniques to make book covers. In systems and control, students in year 9 use computers to model working circuits and carefully assemble electronic components to make moisture testers. At present, there are insufficient opportunities towards the end of key stage 3 for students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in more demanding design and make assignments.
- 162 From ages 14 to 16, students continue to make sound progress overall, developing their designing and making skills in one of the material areas studied earlier. At age 16, the attainment of current students is in line with expectations. Coursework folders and practical projects in year 11 for GCSE demonstrate a good range of designing and making skills, matched closely to examination requirements. For example, in food in year 11, students revising for the examination prepare a variety of different dishes such as pasta and gnocchi to consolidate their knowledge of Italian cookery. In resistant materials and graphic products, students in year 11 complete their coursework folders by working together to evaluate their products, commenting upon ways in which they could be improved. The coursework folders of less able students lack the depth of research and development of ideas required to achieve the higher GCSE grades. The department needs to explore alternative approaches which would enable these students to experience more success with this aspect of the course.
- 163 In the sixth form, students are making sound progress and are reaching standards appropriate to the A-level courses being followed. Students in design and technology have completed well-designed and constructed furniture, supported by sound research and investigation. Students in textiles undertake a broad range of detailed investigations, demonstrating a good variety of decorative and constructional techniques.
- 164 In all years, students respond well and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. They work well together, and relationships between students and their teachers are good. They listen well, but there are generally insufficient opportunities in lessons for students to engage in group or whole-class discussions in which they are required to talk about their own work, or the work of others, or listen to the views of others. The design and make assignment in resistant materials in year 9 provides a good opportunity for students to take more responsibility for their own learning and to work more independently, and these students successfully produce a variety of balancing toys.
- 165 The quality of teaching in all key stages is sound. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and have planned a suitable range of projects to teach a good range of designing and making skills in each area. However, insufficient opportunities are taken at present to ensure that as students move from one area to another, the work they are set builds upon their earlier experiences and becomes gradually more demanding. For example, as they move from food and textiles into resistant materials and graphics.

- 166 Teachers give clear introductions to lessons to set the context. However, they do not usually share learning targets with students at the start of lessons, or at the end discuss the learning that has taken place to assess the progress made. Teachers provide good help and support to groups and manage practical activities well. The use of products as a stimulus to support students' designing and making in each unit of work is under-developed at present. Suitable assessment and marking procedures are in place. Students' work is often marked with detailed comments, clarifying how well they have done and how they can improve. However, the standard of marking is inconsistent across the department.
- 167 The head of department is providing effective leadership and management of the subject, which is having a positive impact upon raising overall standards in design and technology. The team is now working successfully together to establish common working procedures, for example, in relation to the preparation of units of work, the presentation of students' work and assessment procedures. In order to raise standards further, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning requires strengthening.
- 168 Since the previous report, the department has made sound progress. Standards are now much more consistent across the department and are now in line with national expectations in all material areas.

GEOGRAPHY

- 169 The head of department was away during the week of the inspection. As a result, temporary teachers taught his lessons. The judgements for standards in year 9 are based on lesson observations because students' work and recent teacher assessments were not made available.
- 170 By age 14, students' standards are mostly in line with national expectations. They know, for example, the reasons for population changes in India and China and can understand the causal relationships between birth and death rates. Students have good knowledge of the population pressures in China this century and can understand the reasons leading to the adoption of a one-child policy. Some can perceptively question the arguments for and against this policy. Where students are not achieving expected standards, they do not understand the reasons for the decline in population in the Massif Central in France in the 1950s and 1960s.
- 171 By age 16, students' standards are in line with national averages. Students know about the ecosystem of tropical rainforests and the scale of global destruction in the recent past. They understand terms such as "sustainable" and "indigenous", but a few struggle with the definition of "deforestation". Recent examination results in the GCSE have improved from below average in 1997 to significantly above in 1999, although the proportion of students entered has steadily fallen. There is not a major difference between the performance of boys and girls, contrary to the national picture, and boys attain markedly better results than the average for boys nationally.
- 172 By age 18, students' standards are in line with course expectations. They know about the conflicts that arise when less economically developed countries try to modernise and industrialise. They understand the effects of mass tourism in various parts of the world, such as the Alps and Kenya. Their knowledge of physical geography is secure, and they know about the reasons for coastal erosion, flooding and the role of drainage basins. Results in the A level examinations in 1999 were good; all 11 candidates passed, with just over half gaining grades A and B.

- 173 Teaching at key stage 3 varies from being mostly good with a significant minority being unsatisfactory. Non-specialist, temporary teachers, account for some of the latter. Teaching at key stage 4 and in the sixth form is good or, very occasionally, very good. The specialist teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of its examination requirements. This is used extremely well to enhance students' understanding through the use of intensive questioning and discussion. Where teaching is effective, lessons are well planned with good routines and expectations of behaviour. Lessons are characterised by friendly but firm discipline and students are managed extremely well, particularly at key stage 4. A few younger students, such as in year 8, can become easily restless and be potentially disruptive, but are handled very well. Lessons are appropriately paced and have the right amount of challenge for all abilities, with good and regular verbal feedback to students. Resources, such as atlases, textbooks and the video recorder are well used. In all such lessons, students' skills in speaking and listening are well promoted. They are also encouraged to read out aloud, but not enough emphasis is placed on developing their writing skills, particularly grammar and punctuation. Numeracy is well promoted. Homework is regularly set and marked, but it is sometimes too brief and does not encourage the development of students' enquiry skills.
- 174 Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the pace of work is inappropriate and classes are not properly managed. In a year 9 lesson on France, for example, the teacher could not hold the attention of all students, many of whom engaged in irrelevant chatter. The video recorder was not periodically stopped to make pertinent points. Students were asked to make notes with little or no guidance.
- 175 Students' learning is mostly satisfactory at key stage 3 and occasionally good or, sometimes very good. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, it is mostly good or very occasionally, very good. Students concentrate well and make generally good progress. They are keen to participate in discussions. The more able produce work of a high standard, especially at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs make generally good progress, particularly when they are given additional adult support. At key stage 3, students' attitudes to their learning are generally sound or occasionally good or very good. At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, they are very good. Students work well together. Behaviour is mostly very good, although there is some lack of application by a few younger students.
- 176 The curriculum is broad, but opportunities for fieldwork are extremely limited. There is no planning for the use of information and communication technology. The overall management of the department is unsatisfactory. There is no firm direction and the teachers do not work as a team. The development plan is not comprehensive enough, there is no record of meetings and there are no schemes of work for key stage 4 and the sixth form. There is little monitoring or evaluation of the work of the department. The subject has an adequate allocation of funds, but financial planning and spending are weak. The regular assessment and marking of students' work remains poor. Marking is undertaken, but consists largely of ticks, with no comments to students on how their work could be improved. Reports to parents do not fully meet requirements, as they do not always comment on students' progress in the subject. The department does not systematically use individual education plans for students with special educational needs.

- 177 In the main, some sound progress has been made in some aspects since the last inspection. Standards in year 9 are now mostly at the levels typically seen and there is more challenge for students of all abilities. The 1999 results in the GCSE examinations are well above the average. Teaching has improved but, at key stage 3, a significant minority is unsatisfactory. Students generally concentrate well and work with commitment. However, assessment procedures are poor and there is an overall shortage of high quality textbooks and other learning resources, such as atlases, globes and audio-visual equipment. There is still not enough emphasis on enquiry skills, particularly at key stage 3. The subject was very popular as an option, but numbers are falling - there is no group in Year 12 and only one group in year 10. Accommodation has substantially improved.

HISTORY

- 178 Attainment in history is below national expectations at the end of both key stages 3 and 4. The most recent GCSE results were well below the national average. GCSE results had been average or higher in the previous two years. Standards being attained in sixth form lessons are sound and this is reflected in the A-level results which were in line with the national average.
- 179 Progress for students aged 11-14 is slow. The topics studied are not placed securely in context, so students find it hard to make links and connections with earlier events and they struggle to explain issues of causation and motivation. They have a poor grasp of chronology. Written responses are often well presented but tend to be brief. Where students are asked to use evidence to reconstruct an event from a particular point of view, for example an account of the Armada, their response is much better. Progress is better for students aged 14-16. They demonstrate good analytical skills in the interpretation of sources and are able to discuss issues of reliability and bias. Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress and have developed good note taking skills.
- 180 Most teaching groups contain students of a wide range of attainment. Many students with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants. There is, though, little evidence of differentiation in terms of the materials used, the expectations set or in the way work is assessed.
- 181 There is some good teaching in history and two thirds of the lessons were satisfactory or better. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to motivate students. Good searching questions are asked which promote lively debates, for example a year 8 lesson about the relationship between King Charles 1 and parliament. However, In the unsatisfactory lessons the expectations placed on students are low leading to a lack of purpose, pace and rigour. In some lessons too much time is allocated to activities which do not develop the knowledge and understanding of history. There is also sometimes a lack of clarity on the learning outcomes for a lesson, leading to a lack of progress.
- 182 In most lessons students co-operate well with each other and the teacher. Behaviour is generally good, except when frustration or boredom with the task set results in a loss of concentration or an unwillingness to work.
- 183 The extensive use made of the learning resource centre, by students undertaking research based on CD-Roms, the internet and books, would be more effective if students were given more structure, clarity and guidance for their task. Good use is made of video clips, photographs and extracts from documents.

- 184 The overall management of history is not sufficiently clear and purposeful. The department has developed a scheme of work since the last inspection, but it is not followed consistently, with some groups spending two terms on aspects scheduled for one term. This diversity means that there is not a consistency of experience provided for all students.
- 185 The department has developed a marking policy since the last inspection which is used by all staff. There is though inconsistency in the use of grades, with some staff giving the highest achievement grade too easily, thus lowering the expectations placed on the student. The department still does not regularly assess work in relation to the national curriculum levels of attainment and there are still no central records.
- 186 Progress has been made since the last inspection in the environment in which history is taught and the resources which are used. In order to improve further more emphasis needs to be placed on planning, monitoring and evaluation, so that a shared vision is created and implemented across the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 187 Students enjoy the opportunity of using computers, both in and out of lessons. There are no separately taught ICT lessons in either key stages 3 or 4, and ICT capability is developed within subject areas. At present, this model of delivery does not provide all students with an experience of either sufficient breadth or depth to ensure full coverage of the national curriculum.
- 188 Recent statutory teacher assessments for the attainment of 14 year olds were close to those reported nationally at level 5 and above. However, these results were not subject to moderation.
- 189 At age 14, the attainment of current students is below expectations. From ages 11 to 14, students make good progress developing their information and communication technology capability within business studies, English and mathematics. In these, they develop a sound foundation of basic skills, including word-processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and databases, and learn how to research using CDs and the Internet. For example, in business studies, students in year 7 prepare a report on holiday preferences and use word-processing to organise and present their ideas. In year 8, they design celebration cards and combine text and graphics to produce drafts of their ideas. In year 9, they become familiar with the use of spreadsheets, recording income and expenditure and calculating cash flow using appropriate formulae.
- 190 In English, students develop their word-processing and desktop publishing skills, drafting and presenting coursework tasks. For example in year 8, they use desktop publishing to present the front page of a newspaper, and in year 9, they use word-processing to prepare copies of playscripts. In mathematics, students in year 7 use information and communication technology to create sets of instructions to draw geometrical shapes using LOGO software. In year 8, they learn how to set up a database and are able to access the information stored and display the results as different graphs and charts. In year 9, they use spreadsheets to explore the relationship between the surface area and volume of containers.

- 191 In history in year 9, students incorporate information from CDs and the Internet into their presentations on the holocaust. In design and technology in year 9, students effectively use modelling software to design electronic circuits. Students with special educational needs currently have insufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology to develop their learning within subject areas. The opportunity for all students to consolidate these basic skills within other subjects in years 7 to 9 is very limited, and overall progress is unsatisfactory.
- 192 From ages 14 to 16, students' opportunities to build upon these skills and to be taught, and to develop and practise information and communication technology, continue to be limited and dependent upon subject choice and the individual teacher's decision to use information and communication technology. At age 16, the attainment of current students is below expectations. Students who opt for business studies continue to make good progress, developing their use of word-processing, databases and spreadsheets. For example in year 10, they demonstrate confident use of word-processing, preparing a report on the chocoholics project. In English, students consolidate their use of word-processing and desktop publishing to draft and present their GCSE coursework tasks. In mathematics, students use information and communication technology to enhance the presentation of their investigative work for GCSE projects. In design and technology, students make good use of materials databases to research relevant information on food, resistant materials and textiles. A group of students in year 10 study the RSA CLAIT course and develop a good range of relevant skills, completing modules to gain RSA Stage 1 Certification. Overall, the acquisition of knowledge and skills in these years is not systematic and therefore progress is unsatisfactory. There are currently insufficient opportunities for students to acquire an understanding of the more advanced features and use of the software applications being taught.
- 193 In the sixth form, students make sound progress developing relevant information and communication technology skills. For example, in Leisure and Tourism, students demonstrate competent use of word-processing to present travel itineraries, as part of a GNVQ assignment. Students following the RSA CLAIT course in Year 12 set up a spreadsheet for a catering company, and use formulae to accurately model portion costs and calorie counts.
- 194 Students' attitudes and behaviour in information and communication technology are good. They settle down quickly, access the software efficiently and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. Students use the computers carefully and responsibly in and out of lessons, for example, making good use of the learning resource centre at lunchtimes to complete coursework tasks and research, using the large collection of CDs and the Internet. They share the computers well, discussing the tasks to be undertaken. Relationships between teachers and their groups are good. Information and communication technology provides good opportunities for students to demonstrate their initiative. The teaching materials provided, for example in business studies and the CLAIT groups, enable students to work at their own pace and to proceed quite independently.
- 195 Teaching in lessons using information and communication technology is always at least sound and in three-quarters is good. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the software in use and set relevant activities for students. The booklets used in business studies provide students with a clear picture of the work they are expected to complete, and usefully clarify the information and communication technology skills which will be taught as an integral part of the unit. Teachers provide good, individual help and support in lessons, which keeps students on task and makes good use of the time available. For example, the year 8 business studies group, designing cards, worked at a brisk pace to complete draft copies of their designs within the lesson. Students in the year 10 CLAIT group made steady progress, working through their word-processing exercises.

- 196 Insufficient opportunities are taken to set clear targets for the lesson or to discuss the relevance of the tasks the students are being required to undertake. At the end of the year 8 business studies lesson, the teacher usefully brought the group together to share the work that had been completed and to discuss briefly any difficulties they had encountered with the software. Learning support assistants provide valuable support to students with special educational needs, and ensure that they make good progress within lessons. The assessment of students' capability in information and communication technology is the responsibility of individual subject areas. At present, however, there are no central records to chart individual pupil's use of, and capability in, information and communication technology across the college.
- 197 The development of information and communication technology is a clear priority in the college development plan. At present, the management of information and communication technology within the college has not yet secured a model of delivery which ensures that all students are taught the national curriculum programme of study, or are able to attain satisfactory standards. In addition, reports to parents do not provide information on students' attainment or progress. The college does not, therefore, currently comply with the statutory requirements at key stages 3 and 4.
- 198 Since the previous report, standards remain below national expectations. The report noted variable standards at key stage 4, where some students had insufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology to enhance their learning. This issue has not yet been sufficiently addressed.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

- 199 All students study one language in year 7, and some begin a second in year 8. Students' negative responses contribute to unsatisfactory attainment in key stages 3 and 4. Sixth form students reach good standards.
- 200 Teacher assessments of students' attainment by the end of year 9 have shown an upward trend, to a level above the national figure. These figures are much higher than the standards observed during the inspection. GCSE examination results over recent years have followed a downward trend, to a level well below the national picture for A*-C grades. Students perform less well in French and German than in other subjects. A level results have been variable, and last year's results were good.
- 201 By year 9, students currently at the college achieve standards in all aspects of French and German which are below expected levels, and they make slow progress. Few students can communicate effectively. When speaking, they can compose very brief answers to simple questions, often with very inaccurate pronunciation. There are fewer examples of sustained speaking and writing than is usual, but longer and original written compositions are beginning to appear. Most students can pick out information from uncomplicated printed or recorded texts, but less confidently than is usual.

- 202 By year 11, the competence of most students in all aspects of French and German is below the expectation for students of their age, and progress is slow. When speaking, most students are not confident or fluent enough to give developed answers to questions, or to speak at length on a given topic, and their pronunciation is poor. Written work is usually very basic, although some more talented students produce good examples of longer and more complex compositions. Understanding of simple texts and recordings is sound. Most students can cope with material at GCSE foundation level, but experience difficulty with higher level material.
- 203 In the sixth form, students are making better progress than is usually seen, and their attainment matches requirements for success at A level. They are able to write and talk at length on mature issues. They have developed a broad vocabulary, and have mastered new grammar. They have a firm understanding of complex printed and spoken material.
- 204 In years 7 to 9, a majority of students regularly display negative attitudes to the subject and to the work offered by their teachers, and sometimes behave in ways which prevent lessons from proceeding smoothly. Students working towards examinations in years 10 and 11 are less negative, and many of them approach their work very maturely. Loud and continuous chatter affects many lessons. This has a profound negative effect on the capacity of teachers to deliver an effective lesson, and of students to learn. It is a major cause of low achievement. Sixth form students are very positive about their studies. They behave impeccably, show a high level of initiative and motivation, and make very good use of opportunities to extend their learning.
- 205 In about half of lessons in years 7 to 11, teaching is unsatisfactory. German teaching in key stage 4 is mostly good. However, there are numerous individual examples of effective teaching within the department, for example, the use of games and cards which encourage students to manipulate language and express themselves; lessons composed of small steps which allow students to make easy progress; and the use of merits to encourage participation and appropriate behaviour. Lesson planning is thorough and subject knowledge is usually good. Often, however, the activities offered in lessons do not suit the needs or learning styles of students. This disparity often leads to negative attitudes, frustration and loss of concentration. Expectations of behaviour are not clearly enough explained or consistently applied, and teachers do not deploy a wide or powerful enough set of techniques for managing unacceptable behaviour or noise levels. Where lessons do not generate effective learning and appropriate attainment, too much time is spent in whole-class oral work, leading to a drop in concentration and a rising level of chatter. In some lessons, students only achieve superficial understanding and mastery of language because they do not receive enough demonstration and practise of the key words and phrases they need. Marking, and feedback during lessons, do not give students a clear enough picture of their performance and successes. In order to improve teaching the department needs to:
- make use of measurements of achievement such as scores, national curriculum levels or GCSE grade criteria, which could give students targets to work for and show them the progress they are making;
 - develop behaviour management techniques
 - find and generalise the types of work which motivate students and encourage success;
 - share good practice.

- 206 A level teaching in the sixth form is very good. Subject expertise is very good. Expectations are high. Time is used very productively. Sophisticated questioning and presentation techniques lead to systematic and robust learning.
- 207 The provision of a second modern language, and the availability of choice for the first language, are positive features. Other aspects of provision, such as shared classes, mixed ability groups in key stage 4, and large classes of up to 38 students, impede the delivery of quality teaching and learning. A small number of students in key stage 3 do not study a language, and an unusually high number of students in key stage 4 follow vocational courses instead. These arrangements encourage students' dismissive attitude to languages.
- 208 The leadership and management of the department are sound. The head of department took up office two years ago, when modern languages were at a very low point. Since then, her effectiveness has been undermined by serious staffing problems, the long-term under-performance and poor reputation of the subject, areas of ineffective teaching and inconsistency of practice. She has an accurate understanding of issues, has identified areas for improvement and has already promoted many changes which have had a positive effect. The profile and credibility of the subject have improved. Most staffing issues are about to be resolved. Since the last inspection, this activity has not yet created the desired improvement in standards of teaching and students' attainment. In order to accelerate improvement, the head of department should:
- promote team work, loyalty, consistency and the sharing of good ideas
 - ensure that ideas and expectations are communicated clearly and powerfully.

MUSIC

- 209 In the 1999 teacher assessments of students' attainment in music at age 14, almost 75 per cent were judged to be achieving levels at or above the standard expected nationally. Twelve per cent produced exceptional performances. Standards observed during the inspection are broadly in line with these figures.
- 210 Students have above average knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their grasp of topics, such as reggae or the gamelan music of South East Asia for instance, extends beyond an analysis of the structural features of the music. It includes familiarity with the social and cultural background of the musical tradition, and students understand and can use the relevant technical vocabulary. When composing, they are able to make links between the music they appraise and their own compositions. They can select instrumental colour and make effective use of the elements of music in order to create or reflect mood as, for example, when composing music to accompany a film-sequence, or when creating a TV advertisement. They can identify aspects for improvement, but do not always know the exact cause of the problem or how it can be put right. Often, during group performances, students do not listen with sufficient care to the contributions of others in the group. This is an area for further work. Most students make good progress across Years 7 to 9.
- 211 At age 16, the numbers of candidates entered for GCSE music in each of the last four years has been relatively high, and results have been well above the national average. However, for the current year, music is available only in extra-curricular time, and there are only three candidates. The subject has been re-instated as a curriculum option in year 10 for the coming year.

- 212 Work in progress shows a wide range of attainment and prior musical experience. This is particularly evident in students' practical performances, which vary between 'very good' and 'just satisfactory'. Most students demonstrate good listening skills, but often lack the vocabulary to accurately describe what they hear. They have good depth of understanding of topics covered, as seen in the study of medieval music. When composing, students are able to explore contrasting sonorities, timbres and textures. They are able to create musically imaginative ideas, but are less confident when organising and developing those ideas using simple patterns and structural forms. Nevertheless, the overall standard of attainment continues to be at or above average, and students make good progress across years 10 to 11.
- 213 There is no music course in Years 12 to 13.
- 214 Most students enjoy music lessons and participate readily in whole class and group activities. They collaborate productively in small group work and respect each other's ideas and opinions. They concentrate well in group performances and *want* to perform well. They listen attentively and appreciatively to the performances of others and avoid unkind criticism or comment. The standard of behaviour is satisfactory. Isolated instances of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with appropriately and effectively.
- 215 The quality of teaching is never less than sound, is mostly good, and is sometimes very good. Teachers have an infectious enthusiasm for the subject which they are keen to share with students, both in class and through extra-curricular activities. Units of study and individual lessons are well-planned and appropriately resourced. Topics and tasks are well-chosen. They are stimulating and challenging, and are shaped to match students' interests as well as their learning needs. For example, the use of video clips and TV advertisements links well with students' everyday experience. Most lessons provide opportunity for students to share and compare responses to the task set, and valuable teaching points are made. However, occasionally, when the sharing session is deferred to a later lesson, the creative process loses urgency and the pace of learning slackens.
- 216 The scheme of work is imaginative and introduces students to a wide range of musical styles, including examples drawn from different historical periods and from non-western European cultural traditions. The scheme provides for continuity and progression in learning experience, but would be further enhanced if benchmark levels of attainment were established for the end of each year. These should relate both to individual strands of skill development and to growth in subject knowledge.
- 217 Teachers' personal records of students' attainment and progress are informative and comprehensive. However, the more formal 'teacher assessment form' lacks sufficient detail to provide a meaningful profile of what a pupil can or cannot do. The report to parents contains no comparison between a pupil's level of attainment and national standards.
- 218 The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has been in post for only a short while, but has already indicated a clear direction for the department, and has produced a scheme of work and departmental handbook to support this vision. The issues and targets identified in the development plan are pertinent to the needs of the department, but the action plan, costing and monitoring processes require more detail.
- 219 In addition to course opportunities in the classroom, there is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and a generous programme of peripatetic instrumental tuition. This is a lively and successful department which makes a valuable contribution to the aims and ethos of the college.

- 220 There have been numerous staff changes since the last inspection. Only recently has the situation stabilised. However, good progress has been made in respect of most of the issues raised in the earlier report. In particular, there is now an effective scheme of work, taught by both teachers; the accommodation has been remodelled, and the level of resourcing has improved - although there is still a shortage of computers. There is no longer underachievement by boys.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 221 The department offers students a broad and balanced experience. The standards recently achieved in national examinations and assessments indicates that it builds upon students' attainment in physical education as they move through the college.
- 222 In the 1999 teacher assessments, undertaken at the end of year 9, 60% of students were achieving or exceeding the standard expected for their age. Although these tests are not moderated, this is below the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examination the percentage of students gaining a A* - C grade was just below the national average and, despite the subject only being offered to students as an extra curricular activity, all students gained a pass grade, which was higher than the average achieved nationally. There was no A Level group in 1999, however, in 1998 with a small cohort of 12 students, results were slightly above the national average of A - B grades. In lessons, the standards achieved by students by the end of year 9 and year 11 were in line with those typically seen in other schools. In A level lessons, students' performance skills in basketball are slightly above, whilst their understanding of the theoretical elements of the syllabus are in line with those typical for their age.
- 223 By the age of 14 students understand the importance of tactical play. In gymnastics and team games, students' performance show good development and most are confident at developing a gymnastics sequence to a satisfactory standard. By the age of 16, students effectively build on their earlier experience and have the opportunity to develop expertise in a good range of activities and to study the subject at GCSE. Sixth form students have the opportunity to continue their participation in physical education and sport as part of a range of activities on offer to them, as well as studying the subject at A level. Students with special educational needs, as well as those with English as an additional language, are well supported by subject teachers and are able to access the curriculum and make satisfactory progress.
- 224 Students on the whole display positive attitudes to their work. They are able to respond accurately to teacher questioning and they display good collaborative skills. Where there are isolated examples of poor behaviour, in some instances these were students not participating in the lesson because of injury or illness, these are dealt with effectively by the teacher in a firm but non-confrontational way and this is usually effective in bringing students back on task.

- 225 Teaching overall is good. In GCSE and A level work particularly, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the theoretical element of the syllabus, for example the interrelationship between the culture and political systems of different societies and the influence this has had on the development of sport. Teachers use good questioning skills to draw out and build on students' knowledge. Lessons are well planned and clear objectives are set. Teachers employ good methods to enable students to develop new skills, for example in a year 9 volleyball lesson the practice used to introduce the smash shot enabled most students by the end of the lesson to perform the skill with a good deal of accuracy. In response to a point made in the last inspection report, the department has introduced a procedure whereby students not participating in practical lessons observe and note aspects of the lesson and other students' performance. As this does not enable them to be directly involved in the learning process it does need to be further developed and applied consistently across the department.
- 226 There is currently no head of department and although there is good collaboration between the four specialist teachers in the College, three of these have other subject, or pastoral responsibilities and the fourth member is in his first year of teaching. They have managed to keep the department on a stable footing. However, if the subject is to develop in the future there is a need to provide clear leadership and accountability.
- 227 Developments are needed in a number of areas. There is a lack of extra-curricular competitive games, especially for girls. This is something parents criticised at the parents meeting. The timetable provision for years 7, 8 and 9 is such that two tutor groups are taught together, but in different combinations for each of their two periods a week. This creates difficulties for curriculum planning and continuity of learning.
- 228 Assessment procedures need to be developed to review curriculum provision and ensure students, other than those studying the subject at GCSE and A level, are clear about how they are achieving and how they can improve. Reports to parents do not give clear indication of students' attainment level, their progress and what they need to do to improve further.
- 229 Whilst the playing fields are excellent in many respects, the lack of sufficient hard surfaced areas to use when the playing fields are wet and the small gym areas do restrict the activities that the department can offer, particularly for older students.
- 230 The department has made sound progress since the last report. The insufficient opportunity for activity, lack of warm up, slow pace and the need to further develop a range of teaching strategies in some lessons identified in the last report are no longer evident. The subject development plan is now in place with timelines and responsibility for action. Many of the good features identified in the last report are still in evidence.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 231 By the age of 14, students achieve standards that are below the expectations of the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus. During years 7 to 9, students learn about Christianity and the other major faiths represented in Great Britain. Students know about the major features of the religions that they have studied, but their understanding of the important beliefs and concepts that are fundamental to religions is weak. For example, in year 7, students can describe what happens during some of the major Christian festivals such as Advent and Easter, but they do not understand why these times are particularly important to Christians. In year 8, students describe the Five Pillars of Islam and know that Muslims are expected to pray five times a day, but they have little understanding of what Muslims believe about Allah or how these beliefs are exemplified in the way that they worship. By year 9, students can describe some of the ways Christians may use a Church, but they have little understanding of ways in which belonging to a faith community may influence the behaviour and attitudes of people.
- 232 Students are able to reflect on their own experiences and identify what is important in their own lives, but their understanding of the way that religious beliefs may be important to people is poor. Students with special educational needs find the work difficult because it is not adapted to meet their needs and they achieve low standards. Students who are talented and gifted do not achieve the very high standards of which they are capable, and their work shows lack of depth in understanding of the key beliefs and teachings central to the religions studied.
- 233 In years 10 and 11, all students are taught a small amount of religious education through two short units of study in the PSE programme. By the age of 16, standards of achievement in these lessons are well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Students of all abilities make slow progress in the religious education units of the PSE programme. In the small amount of time given to religious education, students do not have the opportunity to deepen or extend their knowledge and understanding of other faiths. In particular, their understanding of the way in which religious beliefs can affect people's attitudes, decisions and actions, in relation to social and moral issues such as Human Rights, is poor.
- 234 In many lessons, students have unsatisfactory attitudes to their work. When attitudes are unsatisfactory, students are slow to settle at the start of the lesson and waste time on idle chatter. Although they are willing to answer their teacher's questions, students often interrupt each other and shout out their ideas. They often show little respect for each other's beliefs and feelings and do not listen to what their teachers say. In lessons, the disruptive behaviour of a few students often interrupts the learning for the rest of the class so that they are unable to complete their work. Many students find it difficult to maintain concentration and their attention wanders, especially when they are unclear about the tasks set. For example, in a lesson on Christian beliefs about God, in year 7, students lacked concentration and did not complete the worksheet because they did not understand the tasks that they were asked to do.
- 235 Over recent years, teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the subject through introducing a broader range of learning activities, and increasing the opportunities for students to reflect on religious issues. However, significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning remain and they are both unsatisfactory overall.

- 236 Teachers have satisfactory knowledge of the topics they are teaching, but lessons are not well planned. Although students are told the aims of the lessons, they are often not clear, and this means that they find it difficult to learn because they do not understand what they are expected to do by the end of the lesson. Teachers' planning of the timing and sequence of lesson activities is poor. Too much time is often spent on recapping on previous work, so that students do not have enough time in the lesson to do the new work and extend their knowledge and understanding. For example, in a year 8 lesson on Confirmation in Christianity, most of the time was spent on going over previous work on Baptism so that, by the end of the lesson, students had made very little progress in finding out about what happens at Confirmation. Overall, low expectations and lack of challenge in the teaching, particularly in the learning activities and the tasks set, means that students make unsatisfactory progress in their learning.
- 237 Teachers questioning merely tests recall and does not probe and extend students' understanding of the topic. Tasks set often only enable students to approach a topic at a basic factual level and do not help them to understand the beliefs and concepts that are central to faiths. There are few opportunities for extended writing or for independent research. Teachers do not make good use of student's ideas and experiences to help them understand the impact of religious beliefs on the way that people live. For example, when students in year 9 were asked to think about the implications of belonging to various groups, the teacher did not use their ideas to help them consider what it means to be a member of a Christian church.
- 238 Classroom management is poor and teachers often spend too much time trying to deal with silly behaviour and settling their classes down. This wastes time and, because lessons proceed at a very moderate pace, work planned for the session is not finished. Marking of students' work is irregular and there are too few comments in books about how work might be improved.
- 239 To improve the quality of teaching and learning in the subject, and also to raise standards of attainment, attention needs to be given to lesson planning. Activities and tasks need to be chosen carefully so that they build on students prior learning and challenge them to use their knowledge of the key features of religions to develop their understanding of the ideas and beliefs that underlie them.
- 240 The curriculum for years 7-9 is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. There are detailed schemes of work in place for years 7-9. The curriculum for years 10 –11, which is offered through the personal and social education programme is narrow and does not meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Assessment practices and procedures are unsatisfactory. The department should now work to develop a system of assessment that informs teachers about students' progress and helps students set targets for improvement. There are weaknesses in some aspects of the management of the subject. In particular, teaching and learning are not systematically monitored or evaluated through the humanities department, and this leads to inadequate support for the development of the subject. The department does not make enough use of resources in the community such as visits to local places of worship, to support and enrich students learning. Insufficient use is made of information technology to enhance students learning in the subject.

241 The previous inspection reported low standards in the subject, teaching lacking in challenge, poor resources and a failure to meet statutory requirements for the subject in Years 10-13. There has been some improvement made to the quality and range of resources for years 7-9, notably through the purchase of artefacts. However, progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because many of the weaknesses reported remain. Although almost all the lessons are taught by specialists, teaching continues to have some weaknesses and standards are still low. Although a very small amount of religious education is now taught in years 10 and 11 through PSE, and in the sixth form through general studies, the statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are still not met.