

INSPECTION REPORT

Uckfield Community College

Uckfield

LEA: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114590

Principal: Mr. Craig Pamphilon

Reporting inspector: Valerie Jenkins
2037

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th January 2000

Inspection number: 184818

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of college: | Comprehensive |
| College category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 11-18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| College address: | Downsview Crescent Uckfield East Sussex |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Reina Mitchell |
| Date of previous inspection: | May 1995 |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Uckfield Community College is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school in this attractive small East Sussex country town. It is much bigger than other comprehensives, with 1453 pupils on roll. It also has a large community programme involving 1500 adults weekly, but this provision was not inspected. The college is over-subscribed and has 200 more students than at the last inspection with numbers predicted to rise even more rapidly. Most pupils are of white UK heritage; less than 1 per cent use English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free meals, 5.7 per cent, is low. One fifth of the students are on the special educational needs register, in line with national figures, although less than average have full statements. Most special needs pupils have moderate learning difficulties but there are a few with more complex needs. Pupils' attainment on entry to the college is average, as judged by National Curriculum assessment and confirmed by additional Credit accumulation transfer's testing organised by the local education authority.

Under the new system of inspection, the Principal can request a particular focus. Standards in Key Stage 3, the performance of boys and information and communications technology were chosen.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Uckfield Community College is a very good school with some excellent features. Students respond well to the friendly relaxed atmosphere and their behaviour is very good. Good teaching ensures high standards of work, particularly at Key Stage 4. The college is efficiently and effectively managed and provides good value for money. Its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses.

WHAT THE COLLEGE DOES WELL

- It has created a positive ethos with excellent relationships.
- Staff, students and parents share a commitment to the college and its continued improvement.
- Teaching is good overall and in Key Stage 4, very good.
- Attainment is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and well above average in GCSE examinations.
- Students receive very good support through the pastoral system and Flexible Learning
- The sixth form curriculum is broad with excellent vocational courses.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the quality of students' work.
- The attainment of boys, particularly those of average ability, in the early years of Key Stage 3 and in some GCSE subjects,
- The Development Plan.
- Information and communications technology (ICT)

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

GCSE results have risen and at a higher rate than the national trend. National Curriculum tests were not taken in 1994 but results have been well above average and in line with those in similar schools. The quality of teaching has improved, with 75 per cent now good. No poor behaviour was seen. The previous Head and Governing Body did not pursue the key issues in the last report vigorously. As a result there has been less progress in improving standards in information and communication technology, in developing the library, and in providing a daily act of collective worship.

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 | |
| Key Stage 3 tests | B | C | |
| GCSE examinations | A | A | |
| AL/AS Levels | C | N/A | |

| <i>Key</i> | |
|--------------------|---|
| Well above average | A |
| Above average | B |
| Average | C |
| Below average | D |
| Well below average | E |

External results

Key Stage 3

Test results were above average in 1999, but well above average for the previous three years. The performance trend is broadly in line with that nationally and standards match those in similar schools. Mathematics results improved in 1999, but remain weaker than English and science and those in similar schools. In 1999 English results dipped. Boys and girls achieve similar test results except in English where boys' performance is weaker as it is nationally.

Key Stage 4

GCSE results have been well above national averages, both for all schools and for similar schools, for the last three years, and the rising trend is above that found nationally. Girls gain a higher proportion of 5+A*-C passes. Results have been consistently good in English literature, geography, history, and physical education, with a high proportion of A*/A results in 1999 in biology, chemistry, sociology and technology. However, weaknesses in French remain, and business studies and art results have declined. The results of the ablest boys and girls are very similar, but there are significant differences in individual subjects for the majority.

The sixth form

The results for students taking two or more Advanced Levels matched the national average in 1999, but fell below it in 1997 and 1998. Girls again do better than the boys. Students in art, English literature, geography, history and design technology gained good results, with a high proportion of A/B grades, but performance is too variable in others. Students on vocational courses attain well.

The college's GCSE targets for 2000 have already been achieved. Targets for individual subjects, especially those where improvement is needed, lack strategies to bring this about. Standards are high at Key Stage 4, but could be further improved at Key Stage 3 and in some subjects at Advanced Level.

In lessons seen and work studied

Key Stage 3

The inspection confirmed the external results. Students reach above average standards in most subjects by the end of the key stage, but there is insufficient rigour in the early years. Boys and girls respond equally well in class but written work of many boys is less well organised and presented, and shows more technical errors. Some students of average ability, especially boys, do less well than they should in English and mathematics. Progress is too variable.

Key Stage 4

Attainment was sound in all Key Stage 4 lessons seen, except for that of some low sets, as would be expected. Challenging teaching, often of mixed ability groups, led to high standards in some economics, geography, languages, physical education and science lessons.

The sixth form

Standards were high in all lessons seen and work studied, with the exception of Advanced Level mathematics. Detailed diagnostic marking gave an impetus to learning in Advanced Level English and history, and careful planning enhanced it in the GNVQ courses. In some subjects there is insufficient emphasis on independent learning.

Students with special educational needs make good progress and attain well in all years.

Key skills

Students' oral skills are very good. They enjoy discussion and contribute readily. They listen well to their teachers and to one another, and are sensitive to alternative points of view. Levels of literacy are lower. Personal reading is not sufficiently promoted. Numeracy is well supported in mathematics and science but not in other subjects. Many students word-process essays, often at home, but the lack of wider applications of information and communication technology remains a concern.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the college | Excellent. Students appreciate that they are expected to work hard. They welcome the opportunities at Uckfield Community College and know the college 'believes' in them and values their happiness. They have a voice in college affairs and are confident that their opinions will be considered. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Year 7 students believe it to be better than in their primary schools. They understand and support the praise and punishment systems. Most students report little or no bullying and say instances of sexism in Year 7 were quickly eradicated. They believe that poor behaviour is dealt with immediately. |
| Personal development and relationships | Excellent – a real strength. Students are relaxed, confident and articulate. They enjoy good relationships with staff and one another. The pastoral system and new mentoring scheme are effective. They have many opportunities for exercising responsibility. |
| Attendance | Very good, above the national average. Parents appreciate the first day of absence telephone calls. None of the students interviewed had truanted and all felt that the college systems would speedily detect any attempts! |

These aspects are strengths of the college. Both staff and students enjoy working there and, despite its size, it has a real sense of shared values and concern for others. Students treat the site and its facilities with respect. It is a relaxed and happy institution.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Very Good | 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.

There is much good teaching in all years and subjects. In over 90 per cent of lessons, teaching was satisfactory, including 49 per cent good and 24 per cent very good. The few unsatisfactory lessons shared uncertain aims and a lack of challenge. Teaching in English is better at Key Stage 4 and at Advanced Level, where the syllabuses are explicit and examination preparation skilled. In mathematics, practice is variable and marking often inadequate. The strengths of teaching across the curriculum are good subject knowledge, enthusiastic delivery, careful questioning and well-timed activities. Effective diagnostic marking occurs in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, particularly in English, history and science, and in GNVQ courses. The college's marking scheme is inconsistently used in other subjects, resulting in weaker technical accuracy. Other areas for development are: matching work more closely to individual needs, and this applies also to sets where the spectrum of ability is wide; improved record keeping, and giving Key Stage 3 students clearer information about the standard of their work and how to improve it. Drafting, self-correction, note taking and guidance on using Internet material are little taught. Preparation for Key Stage 3 tests occurs rather late.

Students are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy most lessons and work hard, including those in low sets. In Key Stage 4, expectations accelerate and students rise to the challenge. The college meets the needs of most students well, although some of average ability could do even better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | This is broad and balanced and particularly strong in the sixth form. The lack of planned information and communication technology is of concern in Key Stages 3 and 4, and a few students do not take a foreign language in Key Stage 4. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | This is very good. Students are supported well in class and also taught key skills effectively in separate lessons. Both students and their parents value this provision. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Students' moral and social development is excellent. The other aspects are sound, but both could be developed further across the curriculum. |
| How well the college cares for its pupils | This is strength. Students are known very well by their tutors and year heads and are clear about where to seek help. The new mentoring scheme is now improving academic oversight. Child protection procedures are fully implemented. |

The teaching week of 25 hours, with 26 in the sixth form, provides adequate time for most subjects. There is no governors' curriculum statement to guide decision-making. The many split classes and variety of setting arrangements are problematic in Key Stage 3, as are the large numbers of boys in most low sets. An interesting and relevant range of additional subjects is offered at Key Stage 4. Sixth form provision is very good, with the added advantage of independent study in subjects not offered as part of the taught curriculum. There are many extra-curricular activities, including visits to exotic locations but few to Europe.

The library is too small; has too few books and is closed often for examinations. It is not the learning hub of the college.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The new Principal is giving strong leadership with the help of a new headship team. He has gained the confidence of all staff and created the climate for change. The pastoral team is effective, but not all heads of department are sufficiently accountable for the work and behaviour of students. The college is very well managed. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governing body has many new members. Liaison between its various committees, the full body and the college's headship team is becoming more effective. Its central role in quality assurance is now being developed. |
| The college's evaluation of its performance | The Principal has a clear picture of the college's strengths and weaknesses, although the Development Plan is weak and not informed by clear targets based on the outcomes of regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of performance. |
| The strategic use of resources | Links between the development planning process and finance are weak, although financial control and administration are sound and improving. Formal consideration and implementation of the principles of best value have yet to take place. The college provides good value for money. |

The current roles of the new headship team distance them from shared curriculum leadership. They acknowledge that changes are needed. Governors have worked effectively with the local education authority to extend and improve accommodation. Catering and cleaning are poor and contracts are being reconsidered. The administrative staff are extremely welcoming and efficient.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are expected to work hard. • The teaching is good. • The staff are approachable. • Their children like school and are making good progress. • Behaviour is good. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater consistency in the setting of homework. • More information about their children's progress and the college to work more closely with them. |

The inspection team agrees with the positive points and also the inconsistent setting of homework, especially in Years 8 and 9. Some parents think homework sometimes lacks challenge for abler children and this is true at Key Stage 3. Parents receive an attainment profile as well as the annual report and this is adequate. Parents have not been very involved in the day to day life of the college, although the community college association is being revitalised.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE COLLEGE DOES WELL

It has created a positive ethos with excellent relationships.

1. The relaxed and confident nature of the students and the friendly and welcoming nature of the staff, including the administrative staff, are the first things visitors notice. It is not an hierarchical institution, and the younger students spoke freely about going directly to the Principal if they had any problems. Parents, too, responded most positively to feeling 'comfortable' about approaching staff with any concerns. Almost all students and all staff interviewed said they were happy in the college and would recommend it. Students appreciate that they are well supported by staff both academically and socially. Sixth formers particularly like their newsletter with its personal messages of encouragement and congratulations. All students welcome the wide range of opportunities offered, including clubs, musical and sporting activities and exciting and unusual trips abroad to exotic locations such as China and Brazil. Some students accurately summed up the college, saying 'UCC believes in us'.

Staff, students and parents share a commitment to the college and its continued improvement.

2. The college is popular and over-subscribed. The new Principal has gained the full support of the staff, who appreciate the changes he has already made, including providing much improved staff accommodation. Parents and students are clear about the college's central purpose - working hard. As some students said, 'Getting better is a big thing here'. They welcome the new system of mentoring and are taking target setting seriously; some younger students are deliberately setting themselves demanding targets. Parents welcome the concern about good attendance demonstrated by the telephone calls on the first morning of absence. During the inspection, the open response of the staff to feedback on their teaching was striking and their overriding concern was to improve their practice still further. The Student Council is an important group in the college. They know they 'have a voice' and can and do effect change, such as the recent alterations to college uniform. The Council is also involved in extensive fund raising and determining which charities to support, thus developing students' moral and social awareness.

3. Governors, too, have worked hard to secure improvements to the buildings, and are continuing their work to ensure that the increasing roll is balanced by the provision of appropriate additional accommodation. The many new governors are embracing their roles with enthusiasm and commitment and are anxious to be more involved than was the case in the past.

Teaching is good overall and in Key Stage 4 very good.

4. At the time of the last inspection teaching was judged as sound in 80 per cent of lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in almost all sixth form lessons. It was good in about a third of Key Stage 3 lessons and a half in Key Stage 4. Teaching has improved. In this inspection, teaching was sound in 93 per cent of lessons seen. Of these, 73 per cent were

good, including 24 per cent that were very good. These figures are significantly above national ones. Teaching is best in Key Stage 4 where about a half was very good, whereas only 12 per cent reached this standard in Key Stage 3. There is some good or very good practice in almost every subject and this strong feature of the college could be developed further by more lesson observation and sharing of good practice.

5. In general, teachers have good subject knowledge and impart this enthusiastically. Particularly interesting examples of lively well informed teaching occurred in history when students were taught about the causes of the English Civil War and, in another example, the teacher inspired and challenged sixth formers studying Hitler's foreign policy. Other lessons where the teacher's enthusiasm triggered students' lively responses included technology where Mexican food was being discussed and considered for the canteen menu with the Internet used as a resource. In geography a lively discussion of the problems of the inner city followed an authoritative and stimulating introduction by the teacher coupled with well-chosen source materials. In religious education skilful teaching with probing questioning enabled Year 9 students to consider the meaning and purpose of Easter.

6. Most teachers plan a variety of activities that build well on the students' good oral and collaborative skills. This was especially effective in Year 11 biology, where students worked hard considering the factors related to activity and recovery, and in drama, where students considered the implications of body language by the use of a constructive critique of their improvisations.

7. The new seating arrangements, with boys and girls now required to sit next to one another, are having a positive impact on students' work rate, although not all, particularly the older students, appreciate this new policy.

8. The more effective lessons involve students in a variety of different and changing groups based on the nature of the task involved and working on activities which force independent thought and problem solving. There were some particularly striking examples of good practice. For example, in dance the teacher used mixed gender groups and sought to challenge stereotypical responses to the subject by using video performances of boys' strong dancing in another Sussex school, and older students studied the all-male corps in the Adventures in Motion Pictures production of 'Swan Lake'. An example of effective problem solving activities in a Key Stage 3 science lesson involved students in testing parachutes, a task involving careful predictions and fair testing. Students organised themselves well, used correct terminology and drew valid conclusions.

9. Assessment is used well in physical education as teachers plan for students to play and understand a variety of roles and then evaluate their own performance and that of others. Careful records are kept of progress.

10. Students respond well to tasks that have practical outcomes as seen in an economics lesson in Year 10. The group planned productively for a visit to the Bluebell Railway by studying the accounts, the cost of steam and the possibility of opening up new track.

11. Planning a variety of activities to meet a wide ability range was most effective in Year 11 geography with writing frames provided for some of the class, a feature too little used especially in Key Stage 3. Preparation for the examination was effective with deadlines for coursework, explanation of the mark scheme and how to improve further through revision. The Internet was used effectively in this lesson, supplemented by E-mail for homework!

12. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is sound overall, but the pace and demands could be sharper in the early years of Key Stage 3. Teaching in **English** is better in the Key Stage 4 and the sixth form where the demands of external syllabuses make expectations clearer. Setting in Key Stage 3 makes little difference to attainment, partly because the range of ability remains wide in each class and teachers set the same work for the whole group. Teachers' records of pupils' progress are poor at this key stage and there are few examples of work set to meet the needs of individuals, other than those with special educational needs, and little consideration of prior attainment. The scheme of work lacks the rigour of the National Literacy Strategy. Split classes affect continuity of learning and consistency of approach. Preparation for Key Stage 3 tests begins late. Standards rise in Year 9 although they could rise still more. Some effective teaching of low sets, mainly boys, in Year 11 was seen where the teachers had high expectations of them. The course work of Year 11 students is of high quality. Advanced Level literature is well taught, with some interesting and novel approaches, for example to 'Hamlet'. Some stimulating, high quality, scrupulously marked work on set books was a pleasure to read.

13. In **mathematics**, most teaching is sound. In the better lessons teachers gave clear introductions with well targeted questioning to check understanding and reiterated points at key moments. This helped the ablest develop good investigative skills and make quite sophisticated hypotheses at an early stage in Key Stage 3. In the few weaker lessons teachers sometimes gave limited levels of support and left students too much to their own devices. Marking is often inadequate. As in English, the higher attainers do well, but some of average attainment or slightly below, particularly boys, underachieve. The single sex grouping is an interesting experiment and the boys' group is doing well. Girls attain well in all groups, but some display a lack of confidence and interest in the subject. Students in the lowest sets in Year 11 are producing impressive work as in English.

14. **Science** lessons are characterised by challenging demands and pace, especially at Key Stage 4 where students engage in difficult problem-solving activities. They persevere and make notable gains in knowledge and understanding. They are required to assess and interpret information and data, engage in problem-solving activities and work imaginatively. These activities stimulate students' interest and involvement. The use of information and communication technology is well planned. In the sixth form, a seminar approach secured the involvement of some reluctant individuals. Teaching is impeded by the level of technician support, coupled with a lack of flexibility in their deployment.

Attainment in GCSE examinations is well above the national average and also above average at Key Stage 3.

15. Since the last inspection there has been an increase of 10 per cent in the number of students gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at A*-C. An impressive 98.2 per cent of students gained 5 or more A*-G passes in 1999. The college's GCSE results are well above national averages for both boys and girls and also above those in similar schools. Girls do better than boys overall, although for the high attainers results are very similar.

16. The results in **English** are well above those in other comprehensive schools, and girls' results are particularly good. **Mathematics** results are above the national average, with the proportion of girls achieving the highest A*-B grades surpassing boys by a wider margin than nationally with the boys' results close to national figures. Overall A*-C results of boys and girls are very similar. Students in lower sets in Year 11 display a mature attitude to work, a desire to succeed and attain well. The fact that 99 per cent gain a graded result in mathematics is exemplary. The ablest students take statistics in addition to mathematics, although their results in statistics are weaker than in their other subjects. **Science** results have been affected by the decision to enter the most able students for three separate sciences. Both boys and girls gain well above average results, as would be expected. Results in combined science have dropped below the national average as a consequence.

17. Differences in the results in other subjects are striking, with girls gaining a far higher proportion of A*-C grades than boys in drama, geography, German, media studies, physical education and design technology. Performance of boys and girls is very similar in business studies, economics, history and sociology. Only in French, business studies and some vocational courses, such as office applications, are results below national averages, and students do less well in French and business studies than in their other subjects. Technology had below average attainment at the time of the last inspection but it is now above average; history has also moved from below average to average national performance. Students have gained strong results in art in the past but there has been a recent decline. Information and communication technology was criticised in the last inspection and standards are still below average across the curriculum.

18. Key Stage 3 tests were not taken in 1994 but results have been well above national averages for the last three years and in line with attainment in similar schools. Students, therefore, improve on their attainment on entry, which is average. Results have been higher in English and science than in mathematics, where attainment is below that in similar schools. Girls do better than the boys in English and standards could rise still further. Although the performance trend is in line with the national one and performance just in line with similar schools, further improvement is possible.

The sixth form curriculum is broad with excellent vocational courses.

19. The college has worked hard to provide students with a wide range of academic and more vocational courses, and the choice has improved since the last inspection. The local authority's policy of funding courses rather than individuals helps this. There are 25 Advanced Level subjects and five GNVQ courses, as well as NVQs and retakes. If students cannot find an acceptable programme from this wide choice they can join the Flexible Learning system and a suitable self-study programme with some specialist tutorial support

will be provided. Very helpful course guides are provided for all subjects. Students also benefit from a well-planned General Studies programme and regular conferences, such as the recent consideration of the Holocaust, which involved meeting survivors. A most attractive new sixth form study area has also been built.

Students receive very good support through the pastoral system and Flexible Learning.

20. Parents spoke and wrote warmly about the quality of support given to their children, often noting how it was adapted to meet the needs of different personalities within the same family. Several mentioned how well their child had settled into the college, often after poor experiences elsewhere. They believe that the college ‘gets the best out of the pupils’, encourages individual talents and is ‘good at persuasion’. Students remain with the same tutor and year head throughout their time and this continuity, in what is a fractured experience for many of the younger ones, is important and liked by them. They all know where to seek help and advice.

21. Flexible Learning supports both those with special educational needs and able students. There is, thus, no stigma to visiting the department. The head of department is very knowledgeable about the diverse range of special needs within the college, and she deploys and trains her staff to deal with them, offering support within class and by withdrawal. She acknowledges the need for a wider range of adapted teaching materials and to update staff on appropriate teaching styles. Making Individual Education Plans more subject-specific is a necessary next step. Students move appropriately through the stages on the Register, and most parents attend their child’s annual review. Students with special educational needs make good progress and attain well throughout the college. It is a tribute to the work done that many in interviews referred openly to help they had received and their appreciation of it.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the quality of students’ work.

22. Some monitoring does take place on a regular basis, involving the senior staff looking at the work of a year group and of individuals, and some heads of department observe the teaching of colleagues other than those new to the profession. Appraisal is currently in abeyance although it is a statutory requirement. There is no formalised whole-college system of regular observation of teaching and scrutiny of work involving all middle managers, with an evaluation of the outcomes and an action plan to secure any required improvement. As a result, staff with managerial posts are not currently sufficiently aware of standards achieved by colleagues, outcomes for which they are ultimately responsible. The monitoring reviews of year groups are useful but rather general. The practical suggestions for improvement made in them have not always been implemented.

The attainment of boys, particularly those of average ability, in the early years of Key Stage 3 and in some GCSE subjects.

23. This is a major issue for the college, as it is nationally. Some students enter with stereotypical attitudes to attainment, summed up by a Year 7 girl who said, 'Boys in this college think it's sad to be clever and work hard'. This year group also referred to the teasing given to enthusiastic learners with taunts of 'boff'. The year head is working hard to eradicate this, including giving badges with 'Proud to be a boff', which the more confident boys wear, but a cultural shift is needed.

24. Most boys attain at above national levels and in line with boys' attainment in other schools at both key stages, but need to match the performance of girls. Not all staff accept that this is an important challenge. In view of the evidence, this is of concern, especially as consistent gender monitoring was suggested in the last inspection report. There is insufficient rigour in establishing high standards of work in terms of presentation, technical accuracy and organisation when students join the college. The youngest students encounter a wide variety of groupings, including many classes divided between two teachers and a range of teaching and assessment practices. High attainers cope and the lower attainers receive excellent support, but many in the middle group flounder, especially the boys. This does not give a solid foundation for their future learning.

25. Reading for pleasure is not emphasised enough and fiction becomes less significant as students leave Year 7. Even there the choices rarely move beyond 'Harry Potter', Roald Dahl, the Point Horror and Point Crime series and, more surprisingly, Biggles! Reading of quality children's fiction is limited and only a little occurs in English lessons. The problem is exacerbated by poor stock. Role-play and opportunities for sustained formal constructive talk are not common. More opportunities to explore emotions and develop creativity would benefit boys, whose writing, particularly of imaginative and personal pieces, lags behind the high quality work of the girls.

26. There are significant differences in the results of boys and girls in a range of GCSE subjects. The boys' weaker performance is not immediately obvious, as overall grades are above national figures and their performance is above that of boys elsewhere. In the A*-C range in 1999, girls' results were at least 20 per cent higher than the boys in English (21 per cent), drama (21 per cent), French (22 per cent), geography (34 per cent), German (30 per cent), and media studies (26 per cent). In these subjects, girls' performance in comparison with boys is also higher than that found in England as a whole.

27. Not all departmental development plans have strategies for eradicating these differences. Teachers do not all challenge laziness, which is more apparent in written work, including homework. In lessons, most students work diligently, although boys lose concentration faster than girls do and require more cajoling to work at all levels. The practice of mixed gender working groups is a positive move, but with so many boys in the lower sets this cannot always be arranged. Some sixth formers have been allowed to do too little work for too long in Advanced Level mathematics.

28. Some heads of department are concerned about the 'open access' policy in the sixth form and are unsure of their role in early intervention to ensure students' course work is completed on time and to an acceptable standard.

The Development Plan

29. The college's logo, 'Realising potential', is not effectively promoted through a set of overarching aims capable of guiding future development. Those that introduce the 'Improvement' or Development Plan are too wide-ranging. The listed objectives are, in fact, statements of intent. These are inconsistently translated into detailed plans for each area and have too few strategies to secure delivery. There is no link to the budget planning cycle. The plan is over-complicated.

30. Despite the extensive debate reported by the headship team, staff interviewed could not recall the Plan's key points; nor did they feel they had been fully involved in its preparation.

31. A feature of the college's style is that middle managers have had considerable autonomy and whole college approaches and policies are less common. As a result, although the plan correctly targets boys' attainment, most departmental plans do not refer to it.

32. Heads of department and year have been insufficiently challenged about their proposals for raising achievement; some set targets which are too low and a few set none.

33. The deployment of staff currently has the least experienced teachers with heavy loads and the most experienced, light.

Information and communications technology

34. This was a key issue in the last inspection and there has been little improvement. At present, the requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met. A further large financial investment in equipment has been made but there has not been a parallel movement in teaching to ensure that all students receive their entitlement in both key stages. There has been no mapping of students' information and communication technology experiences across the curriculum, nor is there a clear assessment process, with criteria, at Key Stage 3 to guide the award of levels. The requirement in Key Stage 4 that all students should be guaranteed information and communication technology experience has not yet been formally met.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- **Improve the monitoring and evaluation carried out by middle managers and take action to secure improvement.**

- **Develop a whole college approach to the lower attainment of boys, to include**
 - * more rigorous and explicit expectations of all students when they join at 11plus;
 - * structured guidance on the organisation and presentation of written work;
 - * closer monitoring of their performance by more regular, focused assessment by individual teachers;
 - * regular departmental analyses of differences in attainment in course work and examinations ;
 - * action planning to address any identified areas of weakness .

- **Refine the development planning process for 2000-2003 to achieve sharper targets, which are discussed and agreed by staff and governors, linked to finance, and with clear review dates and quantifiable success criteria.**

- **Reconsider Key Stage 3 in the light of the revised National Curriculum, to include**
 - * an overall curriculum policy which clarifies college curriculum priorities;
 - * a reduction in the number and variety of different groups students encounter, including the split classes,
 - * guidance on teaching methodology which enables staff to prepare work more closely matched to ability.

- **Improve the delivery of information and communication technology across the curriculum.**

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 67 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 44+ |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 24 | 49.3 | 19.4 | 7.4 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the college's pupils

| Students on the college's roll | Y7–Y11 | Sixth form |
|--|--------|------------|
| Number of students on the college's roll | 1162 | 291 |
| Number of full-time students eligible for free meals | 73 | 0 |

| Special educational needs | Y7–Y11 | Sixth form |
|--|--------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 21 | 2 |
| Number of students on the college's special educational needs register | 291 | 15 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 10 |

| Pupil mobility in the last college year | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission | 60 |
| Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving | 35 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| College data | 6 |
| National comparative data | 8.2 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|------|
| College data | 0.65 |
| National comparative data | 1.2 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 117 | 127 | 244 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above | Boys | 74 | 85 | 84 |
| | Girls | 103 | 84 | 85 |
| | Total | 177 | 169 | 169 |
| Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above | College | 73(89) | 70(65) | 69(69) |
| | National | 63(65) | 62(60) | 55(56) |
| Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above | College | 32(74) | 42(35) | 30(38) |
| | National | 28(35) | 38(36) | 23(27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above | Boys | 88 | 96 | 92 |
| | Girls | 118 | 107 | 98 |
| | Total | 206 | 203 | 190 |
| Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above | College | 84(85) | 83(71) | 78(75) |
| | National | 64(61) | 64(64) | 60(61) |
| Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above | College | 55(54) | 48(46) | 41(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 |
| | 1999 | 127 | 99 | 226 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A*-C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Numbers of students achieving the standard specified | Boys | 75 | 126 | 126 |
| | Girls | 64 | 96 | 97 |
| | Total | 139 | 222 | 223 |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | College | 62(62.8) | 98(97.7) | 99(98.6) |
| | National | 45.3(44.6) | 90.7(89.8) | 95.7 |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Average point score per student | College | 47.7(46.7) |
| | National | 37.8(36.8) |

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

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 | 54 | 41 | 95 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-Levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-Levels or equivalent | | |
|---|---|--------|------------|--|--------|----------|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| College | 15.4 | 18.1 | 16.6(15.6) | 3.5 | 2 | 2.9(2.5) |
| National | 17.7 | 18.1 | 17.9(17.6) | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.8(2.8) |

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

| Vocational qualifications | | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|--------|----------------|
| Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | College | 43 | 89% |
| | National | | N/A |

Ethnic background of students

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 1 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 2 |
| Pakistani | 1 |
| Bangladeshi | 2 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 1088 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0 |

Exclusions in the last college year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 32 | 2 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7 - Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 89.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16.1 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Y7 - Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 22 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 606 |

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 - Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 76.9 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size:

Y7 - Y13

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 24.3 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22.1 |

Financial information

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

| | £ |
|--|------------|
| Total income | 3203455.00 |
| Total expenditure | 3239631.00 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2355.00 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 70054.00 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 33878.00 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

| |
|------|
| 1453 |
| 247 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| My child likes the college. | 42 | 51 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in the college. | 42 | 49 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the college is good. | 27 | 63 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 24 | 52 | 16 | 3 | 5 |
| The teaching is good. | 36 | 59 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 37 | 50 | 11 | 2 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem. | 62 | 31 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 67 | 30 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The college works closely with parents. | 34 | 53 | 10 | 2 | 1 |
| The college is well led and managed | 48 | 42 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| . | | | | | |
| The college is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 44 | 47 | 5 | 0 | 4 |
| The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 37 | 43 | 8 | 3 | 9 |

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents said they were unsure about the quality of the college's leadership because most members of the senior team are new. Some parents raised the issue of whether an anti-excellence ethos existed amongst some pupils. Others had concerns about the teaching of French and the lack of marking in mathematics. The quality of the pastoral care was praised.