

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**THE PROSPECT COLLEGE**

Reading

LEA area : Reading

Unique Reference Number : 110106

Principal : Mr C P Suchley

Reporting inspector : Mrs S R Richardson  
(1038)

Dates of inspection : 15 to 19 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708044

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive Technology College
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
College address:	Honey End Lane, Reading, RG 30 4EL
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Alan Glanville
Date of previous inspection:	May 1995

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Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Sylvia Richardson, Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management The efficiency of the college
Mr Geza Hanniker, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mr Michael Davidson	Religious education	Curriculum and assessment Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr John Forster	English Drama Literacy	
Mr David Lee	Mathematics Numeracy	
Mrs Val Blackburn	Science	
Mr Richard Patterson	Design and technology Information and communications technology	
Mr Brian Frederick	Geography History	
Miss Gill Biscomb	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
Mr Charles Whitham	Modern Languages, French and German	
Mr Terry Chip	Art	
Mr David Wigley	Music	
Mr Fred Herbert	Physical education	
Mr John Hardy	Business studies	Sixth form

	Economics	
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the college does well

- After a slow initial response to the previous inspection report, the pace of improvement has considerably increased in the last two years, under the effective leadership of the principal.  
A high proportion of the teaching – fifty-eight per cent – is good or very good and ninety-six per cent is at least satisfactory; students are, as a result, making at least satisfactory progress.
- Students behave well in lessons and around school, and are courteous to adults.
- There are good relationships between teachers and students, supporting learning and encouraging good attitudes to work.
- The non-teaching staff provides high quality support to the curriculum and to students.
- The extra-curricular programme of activities is good, especially in sport.
- The college is welcoming to parents and the community and open to suggestions about improvement. It provides good facilities for the community, especially in information and communications technology.
- The college manages its resources well.
- Leadership of faculties and departments is working well.

### • Where the college has weaknesses

- I. Not enough attention is given across the curriculum to reading and writing and their impact on attainment.
- II. The college lacks overall curriculum leadership; the monitoring of teaching is not yet done consistently enough.
- III. Statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and information technology in Key Stage 4 for some pupils are not fully met.
- IV. Classroom teachers make insufficient use of available information to identify and support the minority of students who are underachieving.

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

### • How the college has improved since the last inspection:

- V. Teaching has improved considerably. The impact is seen in rising standards, for example in mathematics, where attainment has now reached the national average.
- VI. Development planning has improved considerably in the last two years. The college's approach to strategic planning, together with the governors' growing involvement in budgetary planning, is providing a secure management foundation. Departmental plans now include medium and long term targets and methods to achieve them, and the best plans, such as the science plan, are easily tracked and detailed.
- VII. Students' attainment in national tests and examinations has improved, especially between 1998-1999, with the result that although still below the national average, it is much closer to it, and in mathematics, results are in line with national averages. Improving results also compare better with colleges with similar intakes: performance is still below that of similar colleges, but a year ago, it was well below.
- VIII. The college's monitoring of its own performance is in transition. There is now a growing bank of information about students, which provides staff with much upon which to build curriculum change and adapt methods to suit students' needs. There is some inefficient overlap between monitoring roles within senior management, but this is recognised and is under review.
- IX. Students with English as an additional language now make progress at a similar rate to that of their peers. There have been some very good initiatives to work in partnership with members of the ethnic minority community, parents in particular, to support these students effectively.
- X. Teaching in religious education and information technology (IT) was criticised at the time of the last inspection. It is now at least satisfactory in both subjects, and in IT, contributes significantly to staff confidence with computers and to the role of the college in relation to its 'family' of schools, by whom its



support is highly valued.

- XI. Staffing structures, particularly in senior management, have been rationalised, and efficiency savings have occurred in the last two years. The senior management structure is still in transition, following radical action after the present principal came in to post two years ago.
- XII. Information for parents is now good and reporting meets statutory requirements.
- XIII. Attendance is much improved.
- XIV. The college still breaches statutory requirements to provide a collective act of worship for all students every day, although assemblies individually often meet the requirements. The National Curriculum is in place, with the exception still of insufficient information technology and religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

**Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with All colleges	Compared with similar colleges	<b>Key</b>	
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
			<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
			<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>
Key Stage 3 tests – all core subjects	D	D		
GCSE examinations	D	D		
A/AS – levels	E	N/A		

**Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, and in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, have been improving steadily since the time of the last inspection. GCSE results have been improving at a much faster rate than the national average. Results in the sixth form are still well below national averages and comparisons with national averages from subject to subject remain unreliable as numbers of students in most subjects are low. In general, girls’ results are better than boys.**

**Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art Design and technology Information Technology in Key Stage 3 Music Geography Mathematics Physical Education	
Years 10-11	Good		Business Studies

Sixth form	Good	
English	Satisfactory	
Mathematics	Good	
Science	Satisfactory	

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

· **Teaching, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, is much improved. 203 lessons were seen and almost all (96%) were at least satisfactory. Over half were good or very good. Of the very small number of lessons with weaknesses, only one was poor and none was very poor. In all departments, there were examples of some good teaching, and no one department emerged as having overall weaknesses from a point of view of teaching quality. In some subjects, where teaching was judged as predominantly satisfactory, a wider range of teaching methods is needed.**

#### Other aspects of the college

ASPECT	COMMENT
Behaviour	Good. Students are proud of their college.
Attendance	Attendance is continuing to improve and is now in line with the national average.
Ethos*	The climate for learning is good, with staff and students working hard to raise standards. Relationships, including race relations, are good and encourage students to try to improve.
Leadership and management	The college is developing its identity and sense of direction well, although it still lacks a degree of curriculum leadership. Monitoring of work in classrooms and sharing the best teaching practice has begun.
Curriculum	Satisfactory in most respects, but the college does not fulfil requirements for religious education and information technology. Not enough attention is given across the curriculum to reading and writing. Good extra-curricular activities, especially sport.
Students with special educational needs	There are well-designed specialist programmes which enable students with special educational needs to improve their reading and spelling. Better use could be made of information provided for teachers in subject classrooms to help them plan lessons, as, with notable exceptions, class teachers do not use it enough to adapt their teaching.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory overall: good provision for cultural development but the college does not provide a daily act of worship.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There are sufficient teachers and support staff who are suitably qualified. Resources are well used especially those of information technology. Accommodation is well cared for and adequate for present numbers.
Value for money	Satisfactory overall, with signs that developments underway will result in improved value for money.

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

**The parents' views of the college**

What most parents like about the college	What some parents are not happy about
<p>XVI. Availability of staff to help students individually at key times, such as before GCSE examinations</p> <p>XVII. Students are now grouped by ability and attainment in most subjects</p> <p>XVIII. Systems as regards students' welfare are very good</p> <p>XIX. Technology facilities are very good and accessible to students for long hours</p> <p>XX. Communications are good. Newsletters and planners are helpful.</p> <p>XXI. Students are happy to come to college</p>	<p>XXII. The quality and range of sixth form courses</p> <p>XXIII. The timing of parents' meetings</p> <p>XXIV. Some homework does not deepen students'</p> <p>XXV. GCSE results are not improving fast enough</p>

Inspectors agree with parents that the atmosphere of the college is good and that it encourages students to work hard and try to improve. Provision for support and welfare of students was, and remains, good but formal monitoring of student performance is not yet well developed. Technology facilities are very good and very well used both by students and members of the community. Homework is sufficient in the majority of cases, but does not give enough scope for personal research. Standards are rising throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, although still below national averages, and improvement between 1998 and 1999 has accelerated. The trend of improvement is at a faster rate than nationally. Standards in the sixth form are rising more slowly than those in the rest of the college, and the improvements in the college as a whole have not yet come through fully into the sixth form. The quality of work seen during the inspection in sixth form lessons is better than recent past results would suggest. The range of courses for qualification is satisfactory, but the other activities of the sixth form, such as general studies, health education and study and research skills are not well developed. The inspectors agree that communications with parents are good.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

Governors, principal and staff should now build on the considerable progress made in the last two years, and develop further the distinctive character of the technology college by implementing the following recommendations.

### **XXVI. Raise standards of attainment and literacy across the curriculum for all, by:**

1. increasing the range of teaching methods in use, including further use of challenging questioning, and more opportunities for speaking and for independent learning; (see paragraphs 45, 46, 112, 135, 149)
2. giving students more responsibility for their own learning, including extended writing, research and reading for pleasure; (see paragraphs 110 and 203)
3. monitoring student progress more rigorously at all stages and using the information for lesson planning; (see paragraphs 64, 90, 94, 126, 142, 148, 173)
4. monitoring consistently the quality of teaching and using the information to plan for professional development, including in information technology; (see paragraphs 58, 90, 136)
5. continuing to increase students' technological capabilities through confident and competent teaching and planning for information technology applications; (see paragraphs 54, 61, 129, 165, 175)

#### **• Improve curriculum for all, by:**

1. providing consistent strategic leadership for future curriculum developments; (see paragraph 91)
2. addressing the issues of curriculum provision from the last inspection report in relation to religious education and information technology. (see paragraphs 54, 93, 182, 211)

#### **• Address the question of recruitment to the sixth form and its future shape and role in the college including:**

1. providing better opportunities for students with special educational needs to continue their education and personal development in the sixth form; (see paragraphs 54, 60, 91, 211)
2. improving the effectiveness and breadth of the sixth form curriculum; (see paragraphs 91)
3. providing opportunities within the curriculum for all students to experience reflection on values and beliefs. (see paragraphs 68 and 93)

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

4. *Review the roles and responsibilities of senior managers to remove overlap in their monitoring functions.* (see paragraphs 90 and 102)
5. *Increase the range of homework set and the scope of students' responsibilities in research.* (see paragraphs 136, 155)

## INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the college

- 1 The Prospect Technology College has 1212 students on roll on a large site on the outskirts of Reading. The college became a grant maintained Technology College in 1994. It is now a Foundation college. It competes for its students from all parts of the town, from over 20 primary schools. The roll has grown very significantly in the last three years. The catchment area also includes three secondary schools selecting their intakes by attainment. Prospect's popularity is attested by the fact that it is over-subscribed and has for the first time in 1999 received a full intake balanced equally between girls and boys. In previous years there have been more boys than girls and several of the higher year groups are low in numbers. The sixth form is relatively small, and is growing as the larger year groups move through.
- 2 About three-quarters of the students are white. 183 students come from homes where English is an additional language. This is high in comparison with all schools nationally. The largest minority ethnic group is that of Pakistani origin, and there are speakers of Urdu, Panjabi, Gujarati and Portuguese. 175 students are eligible for free school meals and this is broadly in line with the national average, but this figure has changed, both up and down in successive years. There is a fairly heavy concentration of students who come from homes in parts of the town which are less well off. A significant minority comes from an area of the town where many households are overcrowded.
- 3 Analysis of the attainment of students on entry for the last three years shows that over one third have levels of attainment in English below the national expectation for 11 year-olds, when they arrive at the college. Twenty-five per cent of the college's population is on the register of special educational needs; of these, thirty students have statements of special educational needs and a further twenty are at stages 3 and 4, needing a high level of support. This is significantly more than at the time of the last inspection and above average for the country as a whole. The local education authority has placed a special unit for vulnerable students, The Bridge, at the college recently; this caters for five students who need special support; they work in the unit for some lessons and in mainstream classes for others.
- 4 Sixty-seven per cent of students stayed on in further education or in the sixth form in 1999, with a further eighteen per cent going in to other forms of training. Of the students leaving the sixth form in 1999, fifty-nine per cent went on to further or higher education with thirty-four per cent going into employment.
- 5 The college has set itself ambitious aims for the next three years, which it has discussed with the Local Education Authority and with the relevant bodies, in relation to its technology college status. The target for the year 2000 for higher grades (A\* to C) in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 is forty-two per cent, six per cent above the authority's overall target and nine per cent above the college results for 1999.

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year, 1999:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	94	82	176

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	58	65	53
	Girls	49	33	32
	Total	107	98	85
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	College	61(43)	56(47)	48(47)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	College	25(20)	29(27)	19(20)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	28(27)

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	57	62	51
	Girls	64	39	33
	Total	121	101	84
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	College	66(63)	60(55)	50(35)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	College	33(40)	34(27)	20(22)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

1

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

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	71	54	125

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	25	65	65
	Girls	16	45	48
	Total	41	110	113
Percentage achieving standard specified	College	33	88	90
	National	47.8(46.3)	88.4(87.5)	93.9(93.4)

## Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	19	11	30

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	8.7	14.7	10.6	2.5	3.0	2.8
National	N/A	N/A	N/A(17.6)	N/A	N/A	N/A(2.8)

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

	Number	% Success Rate
College	10	60
National	na	N/A

2

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

3

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

## Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	College	7.34
	National comparative data	8.1
Unauthorised Absence	College	1.16
	National comparative data	1.2

## Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	31
Permanent	4

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :		%
	Very good or better	10
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4



## PART A: ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

### EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### Attainment and progress

1. Standards are rising throughout the college at rates which are generally faster than the national trend. However, the impact of improved teaching and faster rates of progress has not yet made its way fully into the sixth form, where standards are below or well below average. Work seen in lessons and in students' books and folders bears out the college's contention that standards are now also rising in the sixth form.
2. On entry to the college in September 1999, a high proportion of the students in the current Year 7 had lower attainment in English and mathematics than they are expected to have at the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion of students whose attainment is below the expected level was similar in the two preceding years. Reading and spelling are weak areas for students with special educational needs and they often have poor writing skills. Handwriting in particular is not joined up as it should be by the age of 11 and is uneven. Students are reluctant to put pen to paper when they know that the result is not correct or well presented. The result is, in most subjects, that attainment is still below average at the end of **Key Stage 3** and the college gradually improves on students' prior attainment, so that standards are closer to the national average by the end of Key Stage 4. Standards have been rising faster than the national trend of improvement. Attainment at the end of **Key Stage 4** has steadily improved over the period since the last inspection. The trend of attainment has risen overall considerably faster than the national trend.
3. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in **English** and **English Literature** was below the national average but in the years between, there has been significant improvement. Results at the end of Key Stage 3 in two out of the most recent three years, 1997 to 1999, have been close to the national average, with girls out-performing boys. At the end of Key Stage 4, although results are still below the national average, the 1999 results confirm a trend of steady improvement. Literature results were poorer in 1999 than previously, however, as a result of the poorer performance of girls. The small number of students who were entered for the Certificate of Achievement in English successfully obtained the basic grade.
4. Attainment in English lessons in Key Stage 3 is slightly below average, reflecting students' attainment on entry. Where attainment is best, and in line with the national expectation or better, written work is competent and accurate, but even then, there are few examples of extended, imaginative writing. Where attainment is below the national expectation, boys dominate class work, presentation in written work is unsatisfactory, and there are under-developed listening skills. Reading is often halting and expressionless. In Key Stage 4 lessons, attainment is still below the national expectation in over half the lessons seen. Where attainment is best, students express their ideas well and have a wide, active vocabulary. They read fluently. In lessons where attainment is below the national expectation, students have limited specialist vocabulary and written work consists mainly of short pieces. The presentation of work is better amongst girls than boys. Attainment in lessons in the sixth form is mainly well below average. The language skills of boys are unrefined and they are not confident in the use of the vocabulary of literary criticism.
5. Students' attainment in **mathematics** at the age of 11 has been significantly below the national average, although the three-year trend indicates improvement. Students who entered the college in September 1999 came closer to the national expectation than their predecessors in 1997 and 1998. Attainment in mathematics reflects this by the end of Key Stage 3; it has been moving closer towards the national average in each of the last three years, although it is still below average, overall. In 1999, the mathematics test results for boys exceeded the national average for students achieving level 5 or better. By the end of Key Stage 4, when the relevant results for students who took GCSE mathematics early are appropriately included, it is evident that the jump between 1998 and 1999 has been significant, with the overall percentage of students attaining grades A\* to C in line with the national average. Attainment in the sixth form is very low, and few students opt to take the subject.

6. In mathematics lessons, the spread of attainment is wide. The proportion of students achieving at the higher levels is improving. Some students in Year 9 are also achieving at or beyond the expected level. There are fewer girls than boys achieving at these higher levels. However, there are sets in Years 7 and 9 in particular, which are achieving standards that are well below the national expectation.
7. In **science**, attainment for the last three years has been below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3, reflecting the fact that more than half the students did not reach the expected level 4 by the time they left their primary schools. Girls consistently under-performed in comparison with national averages, but for the last three years, their results at the end of Key Stage 3 have been slightly better than those of the boys. In Key Stage 4 in 1998, where the majority of students study for single science examinations, results in biology and chemistry have been below the national average, but in physics, they have been significantly above. In 1999, all separate sciences results were below the national average, with chemistry closer to the average than physics or biology.
8. There has been no discernible trend of improvement or of deterioration in science at the end of Key Stage 4, but since the last inspection, the pattern of provision has changed, adversely affecting results in the double science examinations. However, there is much less difference in the performance of boys in comparison with girls than there was at the time of the last inspection. The small number of students entered for the Certificate of Achievement in science all achieved either merit or distinction grades. The small number of students following each of the three sciences in the sixth form has prevented any clear pattern of attainment from emerging. Attainment in science lessons is satisfactory, but there is variation between the key stages, with attainment closer to national expectations in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. It is best in the sixth form, where it is in line with course expectations.
9. In **design and technology**, 60 per cent of students achieve level 5 or above, at the end of Key Stage 3. Girls did considerably better than boys, with 68 per cent achieving the national average, compared to 53 per cent of boys. In **information technology (IT)**, over half of the students attain at levels exceeding the average in national tests. In particular, a significant minority of students attains very well. A small number have achieved level 7 by the end of the key stage. Girls generally achieved slightly higher standards than boys did. This overall good picture of attainment is particularly important in the context of a technology college. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations in **history and geography** (where there were significant improvements between 1998 and 1999). In **physical education**, achievements are in line with national expectations and better than this in some activities. There has been a clear improvement in the level of attainment since the last inspection. In **religious education**, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment remains below the national expectation as it was at the time of the last inspection. Attainment is hampered by the lack of curriculum time, although this has improved somewhat over the key stage, when compared to the time of the last inspection. In some of the individual topics taught, attainment is close to the national expectation. In **modern languages**, two thirds of students achieve the expected level in languages at the end of Key Stage 3, in line with the national expectation, with girls achieving significantly higher standards than did the boys. However, lower attaining students are often unable to understand without considerable support.
10. In **art**, the percentage of students gaining A\* to C grades has risen substantially in the last three years, from 35 per cent in 1997 to 58 per cent in 1999, although still a little below the national average. Girls' attainment is significantly better than that of the boys. Students generally achieve better grades in art than they do in many of their other subjects. Attainment in **business studies** is below the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 4 and below that of many other subjects in the college. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C was thirty per cent below the national average in 1998, with a marginal improvement in 1999. In **design and technology**, where attainment is in line with the national expectation in both key stages, students are aware of the need to sequence steps in flowcharts to control a pedestrian crossing, but they do not currently use interfaces linked to sensors and actuators. In science, students use data logging equipment. In **drama**, GCSE results were below the national average in 1998, but have improved and are close to the 1999 average. Results of students obtaining an A\* to G grade in drama have been consistently above the national average since 1996.
11. In **information technology**, where most students took the CLAIT course and most meet the college's target

as a technology college, standards overall are in line with the national average. In lessons, they are better in Year 10 than in Year 11. In **geography**, results are higher than the average results for the college in all other subjects, but still GCSE results are marginally below the national average. In **history**, in lessons and over time, more than half of the students are in line with national expectations. However, the overall picture as seen in students' work is not reflected so far in examination success in GCSE, which was below average.

12. In **physical education**, work in lessons in Key Stage 4 matches national expectations, but in the GCSE examinations, standards are well below the national average. In **religious education**, attainment is well below the national expectation and, as in 1999, no students are preparing for external accreditation in 2000. Students in Year 11 currently are working from a very low base of knowledge and understanding and this affects their potential attainment significantly. Forty per cent of students achieved higher grade GCSE passes in **French or German** in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 4. This is below the national average. As at the end of Key Stage 3, there is a significant gap between the performance of boys and girls but for many students, their language results are better than their average of their other subjects.
13. Attainment in the sixth form is very variable, and few year groups have contained sufficient candidates for any one subject to give secure comparisons with national standards. However, it is clear that attainment is low overall at the end of Year 13. Results in English at A level have been well below the national average. In lessons, results in geography are generally satisfactory in the light of students' prior attainment, but are below the national average. Results in music were very low. In business education at A level, the results were below national averages in 1999. No pupils were entered for A level examinations in either French or German in 1999 and none were entered for French in 1998. In the GNVQ course, attainment in contrast is good with completion rates ahead of the national figures. The completion rate for leisure and tourism students in the GNVQ was well below that achieved nationally.
14. The last inspection referred to low levels of **literacy** at entry and this remains an issue for the college, in that limited reading skills on entry to Year 7 restrict progress for a significant minority. A thorough programme of testing on entry leads to support through a corrective reading scheme for those identified with reading ages below 9. However, for a significant minority at both key stages, standards of reading and writing are below average and limit their progress in some subjects. Written work at Key Stage 3 is usually neat and quite accurate but many students, particularly boys, find it difficult to move on to the more complex and extended type of writing required in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4. A minority shows itself capable of extended writing of high quality as a result of careful planning which gives them the opportunity to share and develop ideas. A good example of this was in a Year 9 geography group whose very good accounts of democratic transition were the product of earlier discussion in groups. A Year 10 history group used previous discussion on Bloody Sunday to produce well-written action plans on behalf of the British Government. In science, another Year 10 group successfully led on from classroom discussion about the greenhouse effect to the writing of a newspaper article for a lay audience.
15. Speaking and listening skills are comparatively better developed. Where opportunities are offered, students contribute fluently and enthusiastically to classroom debate, though voice projection is often poor and the expression is often colloquial. Spoken skills show up to advantage in work on foreign languages. In general, though, lessons give students too few opportunities for talking about their work in a way that is structured to raise standards. In many classes, particularly in Year 9, boys tend to dominate discussion to the disadvantage of quieter girls. There is little evidence of any concerted effort across subjects to build in demands for wider reading related to the work done in class. However, an increasing and large number of students of all ages make good use of the college's excellent resource area to do individual research related to classwork and homework. Reading aloud in class is quite fluent but often lacking in expression. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in reading at both key stages. The vast majority of students with English as an additional language attain in all skills in the same way as their peers; the very small number who are at the early stages of language learning attain satisfactorily when supported either by their subject teacher, or by their peers.
16. Students' competence with and understanding of basic **number** and **mental arithmetic** since the last inspection has improved significantly. They are generally able to work accurately with number, time and

money. Students demonstrate sound mental recall of their multiplication tables and confidently use this to work out the calculations associated with other aspects of mathematics. They use their number skills in other subjects where fractions, decimals and percentages are required. This is particularly evident in business studies lessons where consideration is given to the calculation of profit and loss from investments. Students are able to read and interpret tables of information correctly about population in geography lessons. In science, students record information from experiments and accurately construct graphs to represent their results. Information technology and graphical calculators are used effectively in many years to extend students' learning experiences, plotting graphs of algebraic expressions. Sixth form students use their mathematical skills to calculate accurately the value of forces in physics. There is a need however, for a whole college policy for the systematic development of numerical skills across the curriculum.

## 21. Progress

17. At each key stage, progress in **English** is satisfactory for students of all attainments. Progress is generally better in the top sets, where higher attaining students acquire the language with which to discuss their own ideas and the writing of others.
18. Progress is generally good in both key stages in **mathematics**, with no significant differences between the progress made by girls and that of boys. In Key Stage 4, where progress is often better than in Key Stage 3, the progress of lower attainers and those with special educational needs is limited, except when they receive some targeted support, when progress is satisfactory. For many Key Stage 4 students, their progress is good in virtually all lessons. In the sixth form, good progress is being made in the pure mathematics and mechanics modules.
19. Progress is also generally satisfactory in both key stages in **science**, with the rate of progress accelerating in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where it is good. The progress of boys is generally better than that of girls in practical work and investigations, but girls' progress is better in writing about science. Progress for all is slower when students are hampered by their mathematical ability. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, which is improved when specific trained support is targeted at their learning in science.
20. Progress in **art** amongst higher attaining students is good. Average attainers are willing to be guided and gain most from direct teaching, and as a result, their progress is also good. Lower attaining students are well supported and their progress is satisfactory overall. In general, the progress of girls is better than that of boys in both key stages. In **business and other vocational** courses, progress has been limited. In Key Stage 4, the pronounced deterioration in standards since the last inspection is due to unsatisfactory rates of progress in lessons and over time. High attaining students do not show the depth of application or knowledge and their written work is restricted. Progress is further impeded by poorly designed tasks. Where good progress is made, it is due to the better quality of teaching. In **design and technology**, progress is good across both key stages and satisfactory in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs and low attainment match their peers for their rate of progress.
21. In both key stages, progress is mainly good in **geography**. It is sometimes hampered, however, by lack of the writing skills and experience in writing in depth. Students with special educational needs and those with lower attainment are able to sustain their coursework and derive benefit from it; they make satisfactory progress, for example in handling data, when they have purposeful individual support. In the sixth form, progress is good. Progress in **history** is satisfactory overall and sometimes good, with higher attaining students being able to organise information as part of an investigation. Lower attaining students have many gaps in their coursework and make limited progress only.
22. Progress in **information technology** varies from very good to satisfactory. Progress is only good when students are consolidating previous work. It is at its fastest when the teacher has high expectations of the new skills they can absorb. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls.
23. Progress in **modern languages** is satisfactory or good throughout the school, but best when work is more

demanding and structured. In **music**, students are making good progress in Key Stage 3, satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Listening as well as music making skills are developing well in students of all attainment, including the lower attainers. Progress in **physical education** is good in Key Stage 3 and at least satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In some activities in Key Stage 4, it is good. Students of all attainments, including those with special educational needs, are developing at least satisfactorily. They are learning new skills and concepts and consolidating learned skills quite well. In **religious education**, progress is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3. This is despite the low base of previous poor progress seen in written work from those in last year's Year 7 and Year 8. In Key Stage 4, progress is unsatisfactory overall, because students having only one lesson per fortnight cannot complete sufficient work to meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus.

24. In the work seen during the inspection in Key Stage 3, **students with special educational needs** in reading sessions made satisfactory and mainly good progress. They were able to identify new words when they appeared in a story they read as a group. Their reading varied in competence, but all read aloud and recognised when they had made a mistake or when they needed help. Students who have difficulties with word recognition and picturing the patterns which make up words make good progress through learning strategies to help them split up words such as velvet, to a word they know, 'vet', and then looking at the rest of the word. On occasions, the progress of students who are trying to improve their reading is reduced because they do not know the meaning of some words, for example, 'villa', or 'pivot'. Students working in the Bridge Unit are consolidating their knowledge, for example, of maps in geography and addition and subtraction in mathematics; progress, though slow, is appropriate for vulnerable students needing a great amount of support. Students in the support lessons in Key Stage 4 are able to spend more time on some of the coursework required for GCSE subjects and are able to make satisfactory progress in a variety of topics.
25. Progress over time is good for students who start with low levels of literacy and half the students who require additional help when they enter the college achieve some creditable GCSE results. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of students on the register of special educational needs have raised their achievement in English by at least one National Curriculum level.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

26. Students' attitudes to their work are good. Attitudes improve as students move through the key stages. In just over half of the lessons, students' responses were good or better overall. Students like the college; they are proud of it and of their own achievements. Students in the college's support area and those attending the Creative Education (CRED) unit off-site are equally proud of the college. The attitudes of students with special educational needs in both key stages to working outside the normal lessons are good. Students concentrate well and participate in play reading or answer questions willingly. There are good examples of students in the support area working on their own and asking for help when they need it, but showing that they are able to work independently. Students in these sessions are well behaved and relationships are very good. Students are patient and tolerant when they have to wait for a member of the group who reads and understands more slowly.
27. The behaviour of students is good, though occasionally the self-discipline of a small minority is not fully effective when not under close supervision. Behaviour shows considerable improvement compared to the last inspection when it was judged only as satisfactory. Parents also think that behaviour is good. They appreciate that the college informs them quickly if their children experience problems. They also praise the many facilities of the college and the extra-curricular opportunities their children enjoy, which they believe help to develop this sense of 'ownership' and good attitudes to work.
28. Students know and understand the code of conduct well. They appreciate the merits and the commendations they achieve. They think these and the sanctions are fair and realise that teachers endeavour to administer them impartially. Bullying is very rare though rough play and boisterous behaviour by a few may upset some students. On these occasions, students readily confide in their teachers, who take firm action against inappropriate behaviour.

29. Whilst the rate of exclusions is similar to that of comprehensive schools generally, it is decreasing as a proportion of the college's increasing roll of students. The college investigates each case thoroughly before it excludes anyone and uses this form of sanction as the last resort. The college provides places for students excluded from other colleges and aims to integrate them well. It has good plans to reduce exclusions further. It has in place the necessary internal support to achieve this.
30. Relationships are good. Students co-operate well in paired work and although opportunities for group work are limited, they take this in their stride. A very good example is the way in which Year12 students organise themselves for a business education project involving field survey. They allocate roles, tracking the contributions and key stages of the project. However, less formal working groups generally organise themselves on a gender basis throughout the college. Students are good team players, as seen in physical education, where the team supports the less sporty individuals.
31. Students' relationships with adults are also good. They answer visitors' questions readily and politely. They are helpful to them finding their way in the complex of buildings making up the college. They show their appreciation of guest speakers by listening carefully. Students are trustworthy and the college demonstrates its confidence in them by allowing them to use the many information technology facilities, often with the minimum of supervision. They may take home keyboard musical instruments to practice, too.
32. Racial harmony is good in the college. Students from all ethnic groups work and play well together. The Bilingual Parents Group plays an important part in this. It meets regularly and discusses important aspects of college life. It covers issues such as the curriculum, examinations and welfare, such as the forthcoming meningitis vaccination programme.
33. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They respect other people's beliefs and generally listen to others' point of view, as seen when students discussed bullying and friendship in tutor groups. They are sensitive to the sufferings of others and help when they can. They have raised enough money to purchase a Land Rover to assist with relief work in Rumania and continue to contribute to its upkeep there.
34. They have sufficient research skills to support their homework. Although they rarely take it further than the essentials, there are examples of very well researched individual work, for example in art in the designs, the materials' selection and the explanation provided for the types of Japanese kimono. Students do not write extensively. Girls tend to keep quiet rather than volunteer to respond to teachers' questions in lessons even when they know the answers. Opportunities to take higher level responsibilities are limited, but students take those that are available very seriously, for example the membership of the college council.
35. This is an orderly community providing a good foundation for learning.

#### 40. **Attendance**

36. The attendance rate of students is satisfactory and similar to that of comprehensive schools nationally. It has improved significantly since the last inspection, when attendance was unsatisfactory. The college has also rectified the inconsistency of attendance monitoring. Furthermore, the first eight weeks of this academic year indicate a further increase in the attendance rate. It is enhanced by the improving attendance of the students in the support unit and those participating in the CRED course.
37. The students come to college on time in the morning and in the afternoon. They settle to work well most of the time. However, although there is a small allowance for the time it takes for students to move between widely separated classrooms in this large campus, some teaching time is lost from lessons starting Periods 2 and 4 every day.
38. Parents increasingly recognise the value of good attendance at the college to their children. They co-operate well by providing valid reasons for absence if their children are away. The college staff and the education

welfare officers work closely to resolve attendance problems of students.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### Teaching

39. Teaching has improved considerably since the time of the last inspection, when the college was criticised for a lack of challenge, especially for the more able students. As a result, the college has focused on the quality of teaching and has provided training and support for teachers, which are now bearing fruit. In addition, there has been significant turnover of staff, so many subjects, such as physical education, have virtually a completely different staff since the time of the last inspection. The last inspection also singled out teaching in religious education and information technology as unsatisfactory. Appointments have been made to these subjects, which have improved teaching and raised standards.
40. Of the 203 lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory in 96 per cent. In over half (58 per cent), teaching was good. Ten per cent of the total lessons seen were very good. Only nine lessons were unsatisfactory, and in these, the range of teaching methods was often too limited. Teaching was consistently at least satisfactory in art, design and technology, geography, information technology, mathematics, music, physical education and religious education.
41. There were significant weaknesses in business and vocational education, the result of using a high proportion of non-specialist teaching. In those lessons, teachers were unable to probe and follow up the main points of the lesson in sufficient depth to stimulate and motivate students.
42. In all other subjects, teachers display good command of their subjects: they are up-to-date with curriculum changes, and many manage to enthuse their students with their own enjoyment of their subjects. The impact of good specialist knowledge was particularly evident in religious education, physical education and music.
43. The best lessons are characterised by:
  - good planning, building on the work done in previous lessons
  - brisk pace which requires the students to work hard and concentrate well
  - high expectations which stretch all students
  - good use of learning resources, including relevant information technology
  - good working relationships between teachers and students in which calm and relaxed management of students' behaviour promotes a good learning atmosphere
  - homework which extends and deepens students' understanding of the work done in class.
1. There are some examples of very good teaching where teachers are able to develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding in their students, and students are enabled to make good progress. Although this skill is at its best in the very best lessons, many of these important features are also present in the good and satisfactory lessons. The following extracts give a clear picture of the overall quality of teaching.
  - A Year 9 mathematics lesson where there was an information technology focus on logo: the lesson was planned to build on the previous four lessons, and these were reinforced by the teacher from the outset. His expectations of what students were to learn during the lesson were made very clear to the whole class in a number of ways. He worked closely with a well-informed support assistant who was able to provide technical support where necessary. He used praise judiciously and focused it on examples of progress made. The teacher was obviously aware of students' individual learning needs and set challenging tasks suitable for those capable of using more advanced IT skills. He rounded the lesson up with a good briefing session which served to reinforce the day's learning outcomes and set the scene for the next lesson.
  - A Year 13 music lesson, developing two-part counterpoint: the teacher stated clear objectives for the learning (to investigate why some harmonisations work better than others). There was very good preparation of

relevant materials with stretching tasks. The teacher approached the tasks in a practical way with all three students working on keyboards. She had very good subject knowledge, especially on the principles of advanced harmony. She had designed tasks to cause students to analyse Handel's keyboard work rigorously. Very good use of time involved regularly moving students on, keeping them on task. She checked each student's work before the end of the lesson and appropriate homework was set.

- A Year 7 and 8 geography lesson in which students with special educational needs received specialist support: the assistant for these students used visual aids well to improve students' spatial awareness. Questions were appropriate for different students and well matched to their needs. Relationships were excellent, and teacher and assistant worked well to encourage reluctant students. There was a good variety of schemes being used to develop help with reading and writing. Teacher and assistant encouraged students to read the more difficult words on a map. They managed well the different pace of working, giving time and more challenge as appropriate.
  - A religious education lesson in Year 10 on the question of prejudice: the teacher gave back students' books, well marked to provide students with the learning support they needed. She then undertook a swift and successful review of the main types of prejudice, using sustained questioning. Her good subject knowledge emerged during this session, especially on how to read the Bible, with unusual depth of insights well conveyed. The lesson was supported by very good relationships that focused students on their own progress. Her expectations of students' participation were high and she made students think. She brought the story to life through explanation of the background and characters. She set sharp time targets for students to give several written answers with good evidence. The lesson was well pitched to match students' ability levels and a good balance of activities helped them to share her enthusiasm. She continued to push outwards the boundaries of students' thinking, using her skills in teaching English and drama well.
  - A Year 9 lesson in design and technology about machine technique in which a relaxed but hardworking learning atmosphere was created: the teacher planned a good balance of activities and had high expectations of students' design and making thinking. The teacher's comments and marking on folders were constructive and helpful. The lesson began well with a crisp recapitulation of machine techniques for cutting. The teacher's very good knowledge of the students' previous work and knowledge enabled him to pitch the lesson appropriately for all and ensure that each individual made good progress.
  - A Year 7 French lesson, conducted in French from the first moment with the taking of a register in French: the teacher used well a variety of visual aids such as flashcards, gesture and mime, to convey meaning. She made good use of choral repetition. Her management of the students' behaviour was good, keeping them on task and interested throughout. A variety of activities had been designed for reinforcing and practising the language to be used. Activities changed frequently, ensuring the momentum of the lesson was maintained. The teacher drove the lesson forward, inspiring students to learn rapidly through dynamic teaching.
1. Tutors conduct the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Most of the teaching is satisfactory or good, with teachers ensuring that students gain in personal confidence, general knowledge and work or study related skills. However, the overall course planning is adversely affected by timetabling problems and teachers find it difficult to ensure that students always make progress.
  2. In the lessons for small groups of students with special educational needs, who are withdrawn from class lessons, teaching is always satisfactory and often good. The sessions are well planned and the activities cover the particular areas where the students have weaknesses. In the reading sessions, students learn new words through repetition in a variety of ways; they then read a story, which contains the words so that the meanings as well as the structure of the words are learned. Plays are selected which are short, sometimes humorous, interesting for secondary age students and which students can read aloud confidently. In the Bridge Unit, the teacher involves the students in a topic to which they are able to contribute, for example, when drawing a plan of a room students are able to name the shape of objects. In all sessions, teachers ask relevant questions to reinforce what is being learned. In all lessons seen, for individuals or groups of students in both key stages, teaching is marked by an understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the students and much effort goes into building students' confidence and self-esteem.
  3. Students with special educational needs working with their peers in class benefit from planning which takes account of their needs in art, music and physical education. In other subjects, the needs of students with special educational needs are not properly met, although supporting adults help some students to join in



lessons satisfactorily.

4. Lessons for those for whom English is an additional language are planned with a clear structure which helps to reinforce students' knowledge of less familiar words. Students are given opportunities to read aloud and to ask and answer questions with confidence. However, much of the work is not sufficiently demanding for the level of attainment and understanding of the students.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

5. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is mainly broad and balanced and provides a satisfactory foundation for work at Key Stage 4. The subjects followed by students in Years 7 to 9 fulfil statutory requirements for the National Curriculum, but not fully for the local Agreed Syllabus in Year 9. Insufficient curriculum time is allocated to enable religious education to be taught thoroughly, as it is in Years 7 and 8. Otherwise, the allocation of time to subjects is satisfactory, as shown by students' progress. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is likewise mainly broad and balanced, but has the same weakness with respect to religious education: the college has not improved since the previous inspection in this matter. In addition, the college is not yet ensuring that all other subject departments contribute as required to the application of students' information technology (IT) skills, by including IT in their schemes of work. The college has generally suitable arrangements for subject choice at Key Stage 4. However, those students who choose to study the three separate science subjects are not necessarily the most able students in these subjects, and their success rate is not high. In these ways, the Key Stage 4 curriculum is not as effective a preparation for further studies as it otherwise would be. The curriculum in the sixth form offers a reasonable range of academic provision, but vocational opportunities are still relatively limited, impairing the opportunities available for lower attaining students.
6. The college has chosen to set classes by ability in a number of subjects. In some ways this is working satisfactorily. For example, in English, the increased pace of learning for the higher attaining students is benefiting them, but the needs of students in the middle groups are not being met as successfully: teaching and learning styles have not been sufficiently adapted. In mathematics, while setting largely works, underpinned by a modified scheme of work for the various groups, again teaching and learning styles have not been adapted to the various classes. Setting is working satisfactorily in science, with the opportunity for less able students to prepare for Certificate of Achievement accreditation. In modern foreign languages, despite grouping students by ability, there is not as good a definition of ability sets as in other subjects, though the lower attaining students now have the opportunity to prepare for the Certificate of Achievement. This addresses a weakness in the present Year 11 where a sizeable group of students is not studying a modern foreign language. Timetabling has led to setting in religious education, contrary to the policy of the humanities faculty. The college has yet to undertake an evaluation of the setting arrangements. The progress over time of girls in those classes where they are in a minority and of students with special educational needs in classes where there is a significant number without learning support assistance, is not sufficiently evaluated.
7. A small number of Year 11 students attend an off-site unit, known as Creative Education (CRED). Early indications, as shown by students' attendance and their attitudes, are that the curriculum is well matched to their needs. The combination of two days weekly spent on Part 1 GNVQ business studies, two days on work experience and one day for organised recreational activities is motivating these students to re-engage with their education and to develop self-esteem.
8. Lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE), taught principally by form tutors, are provided only fortnightly. While the programme is relevant, and includes statutory sex education, education in the dangers of substance abuse and careers education, fortnightly lessons make more difficult the development of continuity in students' progress in the broad range of topics. Lessons observed during the inspection showed satisfactory teaching with good features, which drew a positive response from students and satisfactory progress. Good use was made of external speakers

9. Other than the greater use of information technology (IT) in some subjects, facilitated by a higher than average ratio of computers, the college's curriculum is not significantly different from that found in non-specialist comprehensive colleges. IT as a discrete subject is not at the leading edge of development and its use is notably lacking in mathematics; it is not particularly well-developed in science. Good use is made of IT in design and technology, despite some gaps here also. The work-related curriculum does not feature in the provision at Key Stages 3 and 4, though there are plans to remedy this next year.
10. Extra English lessons are provided for students for whom English is an additional language. Students are identified on entry through an appropriate test, and intensive one-to-one support is provided for a short period of time, if this is needed. For other students, lessons are planned which focus on topics; these include vocabulary that might not be familiar to some of the students, such as months and seasons. In Key Stage 4, there is an opportunity for some students to take a GCSE in their home language.
11. The college's provision for students with special educational needs is good when it is planned specifically to address the students' needs. In Key Stage 3, programmes for raising attainment in reading are focused on the youngest students. There are programmes of study for students with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). In Key Stage 4, some students take fewer GCSEs than other students and use the extra time for coursework and, in science, languages and English, a certificate of achievement course is available. In both key stages, some students who are unable to cope with a full timetable of lessons have carefully planned programmes including some class lessons and some small group lessons in a sheltered environment. Whilst there are some opportunities for students with special educational needs to proceed with their studies in the sixth form through, for example, the GNVQ programme, there is still too limited an offering for them.
12. The college's curriculum is satisfactorily planned. Some links have been made with primary schools in such subjects as English, IT and physical education. However, primary school visits to the college for experiences in science, design and technology and IT also help to bridge the gap with the Key Stage 2 curriculum. The support given by IT in particular is helping to raise skills in primary classrooms, and with teachers in other local secondary schools. The timetable, which is spread over a two-week cycle, provides flexibility; even so, some classes are shared between teachers, as in religious education. Planning for teaching and learning, in subject schemes of work, is mainly satisfactory or good, though there are weaknesses. The teaching and use of the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing, use of number and use of IT are not generally planned into schemes of work. While there are exceptions, such as IT in the modern foreign languages' scheme, the college does not have a satisfactory and shared understanding of how to teach and use these skills. Consequently, students' progress in the development of these skills, and the skills' impact on progress in subjects, are not as good as they could be.
13. Good provision is made for students' further progress through the extra-curricular activities. Team sports, with considerable success in competitions being enjoyed, are available for boys and girls. Music and drama offer good opportunities to extend the work of lessons, as does additional study after the end of the formal day in subjects such as mathematics, science, art and design and technology. An unusually strong feature is the large number of students who arrive early at the college to work independently with computers in the Learning Resource Centre or who stay on after lessons have finished.
14. The college works closely with the careers guidance advisers in providing students with impartial advice about progression from Year 11. Careers education is incorporated in the PSHE programme. Because of the fortnightly lessons and the need to teach other aspects of personal development in the programme, careers education receives only two or three lessons annually for most year groups, taught by form tutors. Within these time constraints, the college provides well-focused activities, such as teaching about the implications of Key Stage 4 options.
15. The systems for assessing students' attainment are satisfactory and present a more coherent picture than that reported at the previous inspection. Statutory requirements are met and the end-of-key stage teacher assessments are accurate. The results of GCSE and other external examinations are evaluated so that lessons can be learnt from them. The college is endeavouring to gather as much information as it can on students' attainments when they begin Year 7, though it is hampered by gaps in the information from primary schools.

However, the end of Key Stage 2 information is supplemented by the college's own tests, as for reading and verbal reasoning, which help to give a sound baseline for judging progress and for setting targets. This aspect of the college's work is developing well. Information is widely disseminated so that subject teachers can see how students' attainment in their subject compares with that in others. Most subjects have sound procedures for assessing students' attainments, though more needs to be done in IT, music, religious education and business education to have in place procedures which will provide consistently accurate and timely data. Self-assessment by students is patchy and is not sufficiently developed as a whole curriculum skill.

16. Overall, satisfactory use is made of information from assessments to make decisions about the curriculum. In English, for example, evaluation of the attainment of boys and girls has led to a pilot project in which the most able students in Year 10 are taught in single gender classes. Information on students' progress is being used to judge how effective this is proving to be. The decision in mathematics and music to allow early entry to GCSE is based on assessment information, as is planning in design and technology when groups change to different areas of the subject: here tracking of progress in both attainment targets is effective. In several subjects, however, not enough use is made of assessment information to plan the curriculum: these include information technology and modern foreign languages. No assessments are made in religious education, other than some self-assessments by students, though this need is identified in the department's development plan. The curriculum committee of the governing body receives assessment information, is briefed by the assessment coordinator, and is well placed to use this information in monitoring and supporting the college.
17. There are very good systems for assessing students' special educational needs through links with primary schools and through testing when the students arrive in the college. Tests and assessments continue through Key Stage 3, at the end of the key stage and during Key Stage 4 as students prepare for GCSE. Individual education plans (IEPs) are prepared for students on stage 2, 3 and 4 of the Code of Practice and for students with statements of special educational needs. These are available to all teachers. A representative from each subject department links with the learning support department and ensures that teachers have detailed information about individual students. In all, although the guidance written into IEPs is not always detailed, teachers are well briefed by the department about the needs of students on the register of special educational needs. Information is, however, not used in many lessons, and only in music is it seen to have a significant impact on planning and on the students' work and progress.

#### 66. **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

18. Overall, the provision that the college makes for students' personal development is satisfactory, though it varies from unsatisfactory to good.
19. Provision for students' spiritual development is not satisfactory. Several of the year assemblies observed during the inspection met the requirement for collective worship but, outside of these, the college is failing to meet this statutory requirement, the position reported at the time of the previous inspection. Provision for religious education is improving. However, the statutory requirement is not met fully in Years 9 to 11, and not at all in the sixth form. In this respect, the college has not improved significantly since the previous inspection.
20. The college does not have a clear understanding of how the curriculum should contribute to students' spiritual development, and it is not planned for in schemes of work. The 'Thought for the Week' is a potentially useful initiative for developing students' spiritual awareness, though the texts chosen are not varied for the age of the students, nor is their impact on tutor sessions, for example, always evident. The college staff has not yet developed a shared understanding of spiritual development and of how to plan for it, while teaching the National Curriculum and religious education.
21. The college rules focus on students' self-discipline and respect for others. These rules, the system for rewards and punishments, and the expectations the college has for its staff in terms of their respect for the individual student, underpin its satisfactory provision for students' personal development. Students are taught to distinguish between right and wrong: the standard set by staff in their courteous relationships with students,

and their patient correcting of mistakes made by students in their behaviour, are helpful in this regard. The low-key rules to which most students readily respond support an harmonious atmosphere where all can learn together with few disruptions.

22. A number of activities, which involve students from all years, contribute to the satisfactory provision for students' social development. The Student Council is a leading feature of the college and has an impact both on its day-to-day life and its outreach to the wider community. Responding to students' concerns and taking the lead in major fundraising projects provide the students who serve on the Council, and those who follow and support its activities, with significant experiences of citizenship. Assemblies often have a social dimension, as with that in the sixth form to raise awareness on the need for blood donors. Musicians share their skills with the local community. However, outside the sixth form and activities such as the Year 8 library assistants, there are insufficient opportunities for students to exercise responsibility and to take initiative. Opportunities are missed, consequently, for students to develop socially through acts of service to the college and community.
23. Good provision is made for students' cultural development. Visits are made to places of interest, which enhance students' learning, such as theatres, museums and field trips. While paying appropriate attention to the mainstream of British culture in subjects such as English, art, music and the humanities, the college is alert to the need to teach all students about the wider cultures which they experience, both in the college and beyond. In art, for example, a visit to the British Museum stimulated good work on Japanese dress. The music of India, Israel and the Caribbean is studied, and links are made with geography and history where India is studied at both key stages. This helps to raise the self-esteem, and also the attainment, of students from ethnic minority communities. Another significant feature in this respect is the monthly meeting for bilingual parents to help them to be fully conversant with the work the college is doing with their children.

### **Support, guidance and students' welfare**

24. The college is committed to care for its students and looks after each based on his/her needs and merits. Teachers know the students very well informally through the comprehensive pastoral teams of heads of college, heads of years, their assistants and the form tutors. The staff has good relationships with students. The head of lower college and his team start to get to know the students before they arrive at Prospect. Most of that is based on information from and visits to the primary schools. It helps the students to settle and, after only a few weeks in the college, new students feel confident. Parents value the teachers' dedication in providing extra tuition and counselling when needed. They are happy with the help their children receive at the college.
25. The formal monitoring of students' academic and personal progress, however, is not yet fully developed. The systems and procedures for discipline, attendance and students' wellbeing are good. The college introduced a pupil tracking system for Year 8 a few months ago to improve its formal monitoring of students' progress and development. Parents will be invited to a yearly review. This is not yet introduced for students in Years 7 and 9, but it will be available to them once the merits of the system can be evaluated. Students in Year 10 have their own five-term plans that help them to achieve their aspirations in their GCSE exams and guide them in their personal development. Marking of the students' work by teachers is variable in quality: there are some good constructive comments by some teachers that guide the pupil but the good practice is not comprehensive. The last inspection identified inefficient use of form tutor time. This is still happening, particularly in the case of the lunchtime tutorials twice weekly following the afternoon registrations. They rarely provide quality time between tutors and students.
26. The students receive good quality careers education and guidance on an individual basis from Year 9 onwards. Every student participates in a guidance interview each year, from the start of options selection. The length of interview is related to needs of the student. Students with special educational needs have their individual education plans (IEPs). These are not always sufficiently specific or measurable but they are accompanied by good briefing. The learning support staff knows the detail of IEPs and helps to set up the plans for students, though subject teachers take them insufficiently into account in their planning.

27. The college has well-developed policies and procedures for promoting good behaviour and discipline. These are based on a positive ethos of encouragement of self-discipline. The rewards and sanctions support this well. Students know what is acceptable behaviour and accept the consequences if they misbehave. The strategies for teachers and the lines of referral are clearly defined. Bullying is not tolerated. Students know how to recognise when someone mistreats them and what they should do in these circumstances. The ultimate sanction is exclusion. The college uses this only when all other avenues have been exhausted. It has devised its own system of support for students experiencing serious problems or at risk of exclusion. Placing a few students there for a short time supports them and avoids the interruption caused by disruptive behaviour. The re-integration rate of these students into the main college is good.
28. The college aims to improve attendance by seeking the co-operation of the students and their parents. The college works closely and receives good practical advice and help from the education welfare service and other professional agencies. The college has achieved measurable success and aims to improve attendance further. It has good monitoring systems and action plans for attendance and avoidance of lateness to college. For example, it recently introduced an "on late report" for the few who make a habit of arriving to college late.
29. The college conducts child protection procedures in line with the locally agreed guidance. Staff new to the college and newly qualified teachers receive induction from the senior teacher.
30. The college promotes the health awareness of its students well. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum includes self-awareness, sex education, the effects of smoking, the use and abuse of medicine and drugs. Personal and general hygiene and healthy eating are also included. External specialists and other parts of the curriculum, for example science, support this programme well. Careers education as a course of study features relatively less well in the PSHE programme. The programme is marred somewhat by the disjointed time-tabling, with the result that some of the topics are taught too far apart in time and, in any case, lessons only take place once a fortnight.
31. One of the college managers has a clear line of responsibility for health and safety. Safety inspections are done at regular intervals. No issues of health and safety emerged during the inspection.

#### 80. **Partnership with parents and the community**

32. The college has good relationships with the community and endeavours to improve the quality of education it provides for its students through these links. The partnership practices and initiatives are good though the parents' involvement in their children's education is not yet as strong.
33. The college provides good quality information to parents. Both the Prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report to Parents have full coverage of the required features and much more besides, for example about medical care in the college and description in the students' own words of a typical day at the college. The year-end Profile clearly demonstrates what the students know and understand, though it is not always explained what they can do to improve. The Profile has improved significantly since the last inspection, when it did not meet statutory requirements. The parents of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 receive a booklet explaining to them the content of the personal, social and health education planned for their children for that year.
34. The Prospect News is a good quality college newspaper full of interesting features, such the introduction of smart cards and the open day for parents of prospective students. Carefully worded 'Notes' inform parents of visits and their consent to them, and also, for participating in extra-curricular activities. The Students' Planner indicates to parents how their children are performing through the merit / sanctions sections. Most teachers carefully ensure that students record homework in the Planners precisely. The Planners are occasionally a channel of communication between parents and teachers, for example, some parents and teachers use it to communicate the reason for absence or an early warning for detention. Parents praise the

willingness of the staff to listen to parents' concerns.

35. A small core of hard working members of the Parent Teacher Association aims to galvanise parents to involve themselves in the life of the college. The support of the majority of parents is of a passive nature, pro-active in a minority of cases. They come to the open evenings, options evenings and career evenings in satisfactory numbers. The college aims to make these attractive by making them more personal. One of these is making the experimental students' tracking a success with Year 8 and then introducing it to Years 7 and 9. Another well established practice to bring home and college closer is the regular meeting of the Bilingual Parents Group. The parents also support the Craft Fayre and social events such as the Fashion Show. This enables the Association to contribute to worthwhile projects, for example the refurbishment of the sixth form area and the trip of the Jazz and Blues Band to Finland and Estonia.
36. The college has good links with primary schools and institutions of further education. Several departments teach lessons for students in Years 5 and 6. A Technology Day is run for Year 5 students from 16 schools. Year 9 students attached to each group act as reporters and they produce a Newspaper report on their activities by the end of the day for the students to take with them. Years 3 and 4 pupils take part in a mini Olympics on the college premises. Sixth form students have the opportunity to attend some lectures at Reading University and the college reciprocates, for example offering visit to the college to a Chinese delegation of teachers studying English at the University.
37. The college opens its doors to the wider community; it aims to be a family college. It offers excellent information technology courses for teachers and students from other colleges and schools and also to the public. A successful Literacy Summer School was organised during the summer break. The Adult School uses the premises, and there are plans for the St John's Ambulance Brigade to do likewise. The Family History Society and the Life Spring church and many more groups are welcomed. Other schools and colleges and the public use the sport facilities and the Life Style fitness studio offers advanced workout facilities.
38. Although the partnership with industry is not high profile, there are some good links which are wide ranging. The design and technology department works with the Morgan Car Owners Club; sixth form students designed a Millennium Badge for them. Several sponsorships help the students in their aspirations, for example a publishing company pays for twelve students to participate in an outward-bound course every year. A local IT company helps with the development of the college's computer network. A national bank mentors Year 11 students to prepare them for their choice of study or work after GCSE. Through the Business Education Partnership, all Year 10 students participate in work experience placement.
39. The students' educational visits are carefully prepared for approval by the governing body. The justification for the visit must contain a measurable educational benefit for the students. This applies to day and residential visits as well as to those abroad.

## 88. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE COLLEGE

### 88. Leadership and management

40. The college responded somewhat belatedly to the last inspection report. However, in the last two years, since the appointment of the present principal, much more progress has been made and the college is now well placed to develop its technology college and general educational objectives and sustain the present pace of beneficial change. There have been improvements in standards in Key Stage 3 and 4 and work underway in the sixth form also suggests that similar improvements in the sixth form will feed through gradually, as students' attainment on entry to the sixth form rises.
41. The school has selected its priorities for development well in the last two years. It is clearly focusing on raising achievement, whilst maintaining and developing its high quality support for pupils. Its efforts to create an ethos of high academic expectation have influenced teachers' methods and relationships with students, to the benefit of both. There is a strong sense of direction and purpose. The principal is providing the leadership, which the school needs to develop further its identity as a technology college and sustain progress for the next stages of development. He is thoughtful and well respected by staff and pupils. Although his senior team supports him well, and has responded to the challenge of recently restructured roles, there is more work still to be done for this team to become as efficient as it could be. The criticism in the last report, that the senior management structure was top heavy, has been answered in the last two years. There is still some overlap in roles and responsibilities in relation to monitoring of teachers' work, which is beginning but is not yet systematic, and in monitoring students' performance. Whilst training has been made available to prepare postholders for the changes they have faced, there has been a lack of focused training for all postholders fulfilling new roles.
42. There is also an important lack in the existing structure, which governors and principal see, rightly, as still in transition. The need for a curriculum leader within this team, to ensure that the school can respond in a coherent and planned fashion to the changes ahead, in both medium and longer term, has not been met as yet. The result is that the shape of the curriculum and how it is to meet students' needs are not clear. In particular, the development of the sixth form has not been coherent, resulting in improvements in academic breadth for higher attaining students, but a lack of opportunities for a rounded general education and only limited opportunities for lower attaining students.
43. The governors, principal and senior staff work well together. In developing a shared philosophy for the school, they are setting clear short, medium and long-term targets and priorities for the work of the school. Governors' links with the school are becoming more supportive, and this essential development is designed increasingly to reinforce departments' commitments to fulfilling governors' and the principal's aspirations for raising standards. The governing body is well led and well organised, although it is not yet always clear about where the boundaries are between the concerns of individuals and the development of the whole institution.
44. There is an appropriate range of policies to support the work of the school. Many have been recently reviewed and up-dated in line with changes in structure, tone of the school and individual managers' responsibilities. However, although senior managers and governors have encouraged and organised effective change in areas highlighted at the time of the last report, they have only taken small steps towards developing a policy towards the statutory provision of collective worship. Similarly, provision in religious education and information technology in Key Stage 4 across the curriculum fails to meet requirements.
45. The learning support department is very well managed. It provides very good leadership in the development of literacy and in ensuring that the special educational needs of all students are recognised. Structured programmes are provided where they will be beneficial. There is a very strong team of teachers and assistants and the information they exchange at the weekly meetings is shared with the rest of the teaching staff, so communication is good. Statutory requirements for the review of statements of special educational needs are fulfilled. There is some monitoring of teaching within the department, but there is too little monitoring across the college as a whole to assess the use being made of the information provided by the learning support

department.

94. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

46. The college has sufficient teachers. With the exception of business education, they are well prepared for their roles and teach their specialist subjects, thereby effectively contributing to students' progress. A high proportion of the teaching staff, around 70 per cent, has taught at the college for five or fewer years, reflecting the high turnover of staff in recent years and also the growth in the size of the college. The teaching staff also has a high proportion of relatively inexperienced teachers, about 50 per cent, though the majority of those in positions of responsibility are experienced classroom teachers who are managing the work of their less experienced colleagues successfully.
47. Teaching is well supported by a sufficient number of educational support staff in science, special educational needs, design and technology and information and communication technology. They are experienced, qualified and take a significant role in supporting teachers and students. Two foreign language assistants increase students' opportunities to improve their communication skills through conversation with native speakers. A well-qualified librarian, who is enhancing the part the Centre plays in students' learning, manages the Learning Resources Centre well.
48. The college has well organised arrangements for the professional development of both teaching and support staff. Opportunities for development are matched to identified whole college and individual priorities. Attendance at courses is justified in relation to these, the quality of training is evaluated, and the impact that the training has had on the quality of teaching and students' progress is beginning to be measured. These arrangements are working well in general, but the college has not undertaken a programme of focused management development, either for those long serving teachers who have moved to new management positions or for those newly promoted to the college. This is contributing to a lack of coherence in management, especially of the curriculum. Whole staff development days have had appropriate foci arising from national or college needs, including the post-16 curriculum, target setting and the use of data to inform teaching and learning. Further days are planned on literacy: this is necessary so that development of the teaching and use of reading and writing across the curriculum is improved: current practice is inconsistent and variably effective.
49. Appraisal is starting to get underway again, with the intention of linking staff development to its findings. The college principal has not been formally appraised, even though he has been in post for over two years now. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are managed by a well established teacher who works closely with the respective heads of department in providing the required support and development opportunities. Some of the latter, sensibly, are open to other teachers new to the college as part of their induction. Otherwise members of the senior management team undertake their induction. The induction procedures are effective, as shown by the smooth way in which the college is functioning on a day to day basis and the progress which students make in their lessons.
50. The accommodation is just adequate for the present roll, with some constraints in design and technology and in art. In design and technology, lessons in graphics are located in a temporary classroom away from the technology suite of rooms, one textiles room is too small, as is one food technology room, while the other can be used for demonstration only. These unsatisfactory features limit the range of teaching and learning opportunities, as is the case in art. The art department is located in three small rooms, without adequate storage or dark room facilities. Use of a hall is not suitable for the small number of students in Theatre Studies. There are insufficient small practice rooms for music. Otherwise, the accommodation meets needs. Subject rooms are in suites, thereby assisting team working and efficient use of resources. Some curriculum areas are particularly well accommodated, such as PE, thereby facilitating the community use of the college. The Learning Resources Centre, centrally placed in the college, provides a focus for students' work throughout the formal day and for significant periods before and afterwards. The accommodation, both buildings and grounds, are well maintained: the premises staff does a good job is helping to make the college a pleasant place in which to work.



51. The college generally has enough resources for students' use across the curriculum, with the exception of religious education, where the lack of resources has a negative impact on students' progress. Resources are often of good quality, as in English and mathematics, but are not good enough in business education. Most departments have a wide range of resources, for example in modern foreign languages and music. The IT resources are excellent, both hardware and software, and are readily accessible to students, particularly in the Learning Resources Centre. However, more advanced work is constrained by lack of resources for aspects such as multimedia and graphics. Purchase of new resources is matched to plans for teaching, as in history. Links between the departments and the Learning Resource Centre are not as strong in this respect as they might be.

#### 100. **The efficiency of the college**

52. The school has annual income and expenditure per pupil, which is about average compared with similar schools in similar authorities, but is below that for many technology colleges. Income is efficiently spent on the basis of shared development priorities. Judicious spending has, especially over the last two years, contributed towards the accelerated pace of change.

53. The college deploys its resources well. There are few areas in which the match of staffing to students' needs is not good, although in business education, there is over-use of non-specialist teaching. There are features of changed management roles which require further attention in terms of training needs, but in general, budgets for staff training are well used.

54. Staffing costs are well controlled and there are generally satisfactory levels of teaching and learning resources, except in religious education and business education. Non-book resources and equipment including computers are accessible and well used.

55. The present position produces satisfactory value for money, and there is every indication that this will improve as examination and test results improve. Particular factors which go towards this favourable judgement are:

- staff are generally well deployed;
- provision for extra-curricular and community use of facilities extend the use of the school beyond the normal school day;
- standards are rising in almost all parts of the school;
- teaching is at least satisfactory in a very high proportion of lessons;
- there is very good oversight of planned expenditure;
- school rolls are increasing as the popularity of the school in the community increases;
- the financial deficit has been cleared in a shorter time than expected;
- students' progress is generally satisfactory.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

1. Students enter the college with levels of prior attainment in English slightly below the national average. In two of the last three years, the percentage attaining level 5 or above in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests has been close to the national average for both boys and girls. In GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of students attaining A\* to C grades is below the national average, but the percentage attaining A\* to G is above average. The results of the few students taking English literature at A level are well below the national average. The most recent GCSE results in English confirm a pattern of improvement over the last three years. However, English literature results for last year were poor, well below the national average.
2. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3 is slightly below national expectations for students at this stage. Where students' work matches or exceeds national expectations, as with the majority of students in the top sets, written work is accurate and well-presented. However, even this successful work often consists of short, highly structured pieces rather than more extended writing requiring more imagination and initiative. The most successful work by boys is in response to work demanding logical and analytical skills, as in a Year 9 group who were developing their written skills through understanding the use of conjunctions in forming compound and complex sentences. Where attainment is lower, particularly in middle ability groups. Written work is poorly presented and corrections not done regularly. In the majority of classes. Students speak and read enthusiastically and fluently, although speech is often colloquial and reading lacks expression. When classroom management encourages it, students can listen attentively to each other and to the teacher.
3. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 4 is below national expectations. There is a widening gap in the quality of writing between those committed students, mainly in top sets, whose writing remains in line with national expectations and a larger number, particularly boys, who do not command the range and complexity of written skills required for higher grade passes at GCSE. Some boys become reluctant writers at this stage. High grade written work was exemplified in the course work of a top set where one girl, studying the role of Caliban in The Tempest had demonstrated both analytical skill and the capacity to focus on the use of language. The majority of students in middle and lower sets are more successful when working on shorter pieces within clearly defined structures. There is a growing variation in standards of presentation and accuracy. Some work at all levels, and particularly that of students requiring learning support, benefits from access to high quality information technology facilities for word processing and research. Where the opportunity is given, students at all levels show the ability to participate in purposeful talk, as in a Year 10 class working on An Inspector Calls, who engaged with their teacher in a serious discussion about the impact of the inspector's speeches on the audience and why they are accepted as authoritative. Most students read quite fluently but speech is not well projected.
4. In the sixth form, the small numbers who opt for the A level English literature course benefit from it and show interest and commitment, as in a Year 13 group where one student had prepared a very thorough and detailed character presentation. However, presentations lacked the powers of analysis and the linguistic resources to convey the subtle shades of meaning that would lead to a high grade.
5. Progress at each key stage is satisfactory for students of all levels of attainment. Progress is generally better in sets of lower attaining students where work is structured or in groups where students benefit from support in reading offered through the corrective reading programme. At all key stages, progress is most marked when careful planning and a range of teaching styles give the opportunity for boys and girls to answer confidently and explore their ideas through structured talk with each other and with the teacher. A good example occurred in a Year 11 group studying Talking in Whispers. There, boys and girls gained confidence from earlier preparation of answers in pairs and were able to contribute to full class discussion. Where progress is less satisfactory, it often results from boys outnumbering girls in the group and imposing a culture not conducive to serious reflection. In some cases, in most classes, it is also the product of the lack of

consistent demand for high standards of presentation and regular completion of corrections.

6. Most students enjoy their English lessons and the experiences they offer, particularly where teachers' planning allows for a variety of approaches and encourages a sense of purpose related to individual or specific improvement. There are relatively few examples, though, of students pursuing their interest beyond the classroom and taking the opportunity to work collaboratively with others with a love of English, for instance in the production of a magazine. Behaviour in most lessons is satisfactory, though concentration tends to flag towards the end of the hour. Relationships between students and between students and teachers are good. Recruitment to the subject at A level has been disappointingly low in recent years.
7. Teaching is in the hands of a well-qualified team of subject specialists, mainly young and relatively recently appointed. Departmental teaching is characterised by commitment, energy and enthusiasm. The teaching at all key stages is almost entirely satisfactory or better, with about a third good or very good. Successful teaching demonstrates carefully structured lesson planning which allows for
  - a variety of teaching styles and pupil activities which make it possible for all students to become equally engaged
  - the ability to convey to students the importance and relevance the task in hand
  - class management which creates an atmosphere of study and insists on routines which ensure high standards of presentation.
1. Less successful teaching shows an over-reliance on whole class teaching in which information or ideas are given to students rather than elicited from them. It fails to take account of the differing needs of students and allows a noisy minority, usually boys, to dominate lessons to the detriment of quieter and more studious students, usually girls. The marking of work is generally very thorough and comments are designed to identify targets for improvement. However, without insistence on re-writing or correction, this useful assessment is not always translated into improved student work.
2. The differing needs of students are mainly recognised through the setting system. An interesting experiment in encouraging higher attainment by boys is taking place in the creation of two single gender top sets in Year 10. Provision for those with learning difficulties is made through creating supported lower sets and reading programmes operating in Year 7 and beyond, if required. In-class support is not always taken into account in teachers' planning and although there is good general awareness of individual needs, this does not regularly translate into modified or varied teaching strategies. The department offers a range of extra-curricular activities in drama, letter-writing and poetry competitions, debate and public speaking.
3. In the last two years, the department has benefited from the committed leadership of a very experienced teacher who offers an excellent role model. The recently updated departmental handbook, schemes of work and other additional resources are all of high quality and offer useful guidance to colleagues. The head of department has created an atmosphere of mutual support and openness to new ideas. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable progress in raising standards of literacy and achieving higher standards in national tests and examinations. There has also been an improvement in the general standard of teaching. The department now regularly reviews its examination results and the scheme of work is consistently implemented. The need to look at strategies for improving oral skills remains as part of the larger issue of teaching methods. The main challenge for the immediate future is to take the opportunity that a young, enthusiastic staff team offers to establish a 'house style' for teaching by creating opportunities for staff to share their respective strengths through mutual observation and for this process to be supported by regular monitoring.

#### 114. **Mathematics**

4. Students' attainment on entry to the college, measured by Key Stage 2 standard assessment tests (SATs) and other tests carried out by the college, is below the nationally expected averages in 1999, but this is a considerable improvement on those achieved by students entering the college in 1998.

5. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of students in mathematics is below national averages. In the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3 in 1998, the proportion of students gaining both level 5 and level 6 and above, was below the national average, and below that achieved by students in similar colleges. In the most recent tests, in May 1999, the percentage of students achieving level 5 and above was considerably higher than in 1998, and for level 6 and above was broadly similar to the 1998 figure. The achievement by boys is higher than that by girls at both levels in 1998 and 1999. When considering the trend over the past three years, the proportion of students gaining level 5 or above is improving at a rate that is faster than the trend nationally.
6. The higher attaining students are achieving standards that are at or above the expected level for the Key Stage. This is particularly true for several students in Year 9 and those higher attaining students in Year 7. Attainment levels reached by these high attaining students in the various aspects of mathematics are very similar. Most students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language attain satisfactory standards.
7. GCSE results at the higher grades of A\* to C grades, in 1998, were below the national average. The college's results in 1999 show a marked improvement on 1998, with boys achieving a higher proportion of these grades. The college predicted this; figures include the achievements of students who were entered for the GCSE when in Year 10, when these higher attaining students achieved very good standards. Over the last three years GCSE results have continued to improve and at a rate faster than that achieved nationally.
8. Higher attaining students are achieving standards in lessons that match the higher grades of the GCSE. These students are attaining similar standards in the various aspects of mathematics and are currently studying topics from the GCE Advanced Level course. The high standards demonstrated by these students are reflected in the quality of their GCSE coursework. Students with special educational needs generally achieve standards that are in line with their prior attainment. The prediction for students' achievement, at GCSE in 2000, is similar to that achieved in 1999. The overall standards of attainment achieved by students in Key Stage 4 are in line with the national expectation.
9. In the sixth form, the standards of attainment by students at GCE Advanced level in 1999 were well below the national average, with none of the very small number of candidates achieving a pass grade. Evidence from the inspection of the current Year 13 is that the majority of students will achieve grade C or better.
10. The progress of students in Key Stage 3 is never less than satisfactory, and in several lessons it is good. In a small proportion of lessons, progress is very good. Where progress is good, teachers set work that is well matched to students' previous attainment levels, enabling them to consolidate their knowledge and make progress with the topics. Students in the higher attaining groups achieve good gains in knowledge and understanding in all aspects of mathematics. Students in a Year 9 class make particularly good progress with their work on plotting the graphs of straight-line equations from a table of values. Average attaining students in Year 8 are able to recognise patterns formed by sequences of numbers. A Year 7 group reaches very high standards in understanding place value, fractions and decimals. In all these groups, there is high expectation of students by teachers.
11. Students with special educational needs make equally good progress with their mathematics. Such students in a Year 7 group consolidate their understanding of multiplication tables through an exercise to find prime numbers. The additional support when available in lessons has a positive impact on the progress and standards of mathematical achievement made by these students. Progress for students in most lessons would be greater if the work set was more closely matched to their needs, enabling them to build with confidence on their knowledge and understanding of the topics.
12. In the majority of lessons at Key Stage 4, students make good progress. Lessons in Year 11 are well structured and teachers usually have high expectation for those students seeking to gain the higher GCSE grades. In one class, students consolidate their understanding of the properties of the right-angled triangle and use the correct trigonometrical ratio to find unknown lengths and angles. Students in low attaining sets are

equally challenged by the work they are doing. One Year 11 middle group, students make considerable gains with their understanding of how to find the area of rectangular shapes by using the appropriate formula. The teachers' expectation, content and the pace of the lessons challenge these students. Where learning outcomes are clear, as for a group of Year 10 students looking at scatter graphs and their usefulness for comparing and predicting information, good gains in knowledge are made. Students with special educational needs in Key Stage 4 make good progress overall, in particular with developing their skills in working with number as suitable preparation for the requirements of foundation level GCSE.

13. The progress by students in the sixth form is never less than good. They build on their knowledge and understanding gained from the secure mathematical base established at GCSE.
14. The behaviour of students in lessons is almost always good. Relationships are friendly and supportive. Students work collaboratively. They demonstrate a sense of responsibility and maturity when required to do so. In Key Stage 3, students' attitude to their learning is enthusiastic in many lessons. In Key Stage 4, attitudes of the majority of students are particularly positive where there is the motivation of examinations.
15. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly. At Key Stage 3, teaching is never less than satisfactory. A large proportion of lessons is good, and some is very good. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is never less than satisfactory. In a good proportion of these lessons the teaching is good. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is at least sound; exposition and exemplification by suitable examples is clear. The teaching methods used ensure that all students experience the same input; although effective overall, this does not always promote sufficient urgency and challenge to their learning. Where teaching is very good, teaching methods are more varied and the timing and pace of lessons is well judged. In these lessons, the expectation of students is high, the work is challenging and good progress is made. Resources are used effectively to support learning in all lessons. The combination of teacher instruction with exercises to give students practice results in sound teaching. Teachers do not yet monitor sufficiently the progress students make, the amount of work that every student completes and their gains in understanding achieved each lesson.
16. Teachers' planning and intentions for each lesson are carefully considered but insufficient attention has been paid to the different abilities within each teaching group, and the most effective teaching style to be used. Work is marked thoroughly and in most cases comments of a diagnostic kind are written that will aid students' development and progress. In most lessons, students receive advice on their progress and where they can make further improvement. Teachers' readily praise students' work and use the reward systems that operate in the college to good effect.
17. An enthusiastic and supportive team of well-qualified teachers teaches the subject. They provide very good role models and have a clear commitment for the well being of students. The regularly sharing of good practice and more detailed lesson planning is beginning to enable teachers to improve their own performance further. The faculty is effectively organised and has strong leadership. Documentation is good and the schemes of work are comprehensive, providing sound guidelines to the teaching of the subject.
18. The absence of attainment target one – using and applying mathematics at the last inspection, has been rectified and all students have planned opportunities to develop this skill. There is insufficient provision made for the development of students' information and communication technology skills within the current schemes of work at both key stages. Through adopting a wider range of monitoring processes, the faculty would be better placed to measure the effectiveness of its development plan targets and to address the issue of raising further the standards in mathematics. The classroom displays, including the work of students', act as a strong stimulation to the learning of mathematics. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staff. Recently rewritten schemes of work, supporting documentation and a focus on student achievement, particularly at the end of each key stage, are an indication of the considerable capacity the faculty has for tackle the demanding agenda it has set itself, and to raise standards further. There is as yet no college-wide numeracy policy.

## Science

19. The attainment of students in science, as shown by the results in national tests, is below that expected nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3 over the last four years, the performance of boys has been better than that of girls, with both performing below that expected nationally and in relation to students in similar colleges. In six out of every ten lessons observed, the attainment of students at Key Stage 3 is in line with or above that expected nationally. Year 9 students achieve above average standards when working out the principle of balancing forces from their own observations and calculations, balancing a beam with different weights at each end. In some lessons, students can describe the differences between living and non-living things in terms of life processes but cannot describe the major parts of plant and animal cells; in those lessons, attainment is below average for that expected at the end of the key stage. Within Key Stage 3 the progress of students overall is satisfactory, with students making unsatisfactory progress in some lessons. This unsatisfactory progress is characterised by the use of resources or activities inappropriate to students' needs or where students are unable to make links with previous work. Boys make better progress than girls when performing practical tasks such as making a microscope slide and those students with special educational needs make better progress when they have individual support.
20. There is a considerable variation in the attainment of students at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students attaining grades A\* to C in Double Award science at GCSE has for the last three years been well below that expected nationally, with girls consistently performing better than boys. However, from 1996 the proportion of students attaining A\* to G grades has been above that expected nationally. Since the introduction a few years ago of separate science subjects for a small number of students at GCSE, the results of these subjects have been in line with or slightly below that expected nationally. In 1999, the results in biology were above average, and just slightly below in both chemistry and physics. The results for students taking these subjects have improved each year with no consistent pattern in the performance of boys or girls. In eight out of every ten lessons observed, the attainment of students at Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations or above. Students taking the separate science subjects attained above national expectations. They were able to identify amplitude, frequency and wavelength from wave diagrams or could describe in detail the process of digestion and absorption of food in humans using the correct terms. Average attaining students were able to describe the reactions of acids with metals and carbonates in terms of the gases produced and write chemical equations. Those students attaining below that expected nationally, whilst able to describe how to make a test fair, were not able to manipulate more than one factor in the experiment or make a prediction of the outcome.
21. The progress of students in Key Stage 4 is always at least satisfactory, and in four out of every ten lessons seen, it was good. The best progress is seen when students can use different sets of information as a basis for developing further ideas such as when identifying similarities in two types of graphs produced to test the elasticity of different materials. Progress over a period of time is good when students use previously acquired knowledge and apply it to new situations. Good examples occur when describing the stages of birth, using the correct names for the parts of the female reproductive system, or working out the laws of reflection by measuring the angles of incidence and reflection in ray diagrams, having previously learnt about reflection in mirrors.
22. Since the introduction of a separate science programme three years ago, the variation in the small number of students at A level has prevented any pattern of attainment from emerging. The proportions attaining grades A to E in biology and chemistry in 1999 were better than in 1998, whilst those for physics were much below that of the previous year. The small groups entered for the A level examinations also explains the significant variation in the attainment of students from one year to the next in both biology and chemistry. Within lessons, the attainment of students in the sixth form is nearly always in line with or above course expectations. Students are able to describe the 3-dimensional shape of complex metal ions using the correct nomenclature or calculate resultant vector forces. Progress within lessons observed in the sixth form is always satisfactory or better. However, for some students, progress is slower when performing complex physics calculations because of their more limited mathematical ability.
23. Students' response to their work in science is generally satisfactory and sometimes good, with evidence of

occasional unsatisfactory response in Key Stage 3. Their concentration varies depending on the teachers' expectations, the type of task and whether time limits are given for completion. Lack of application is generally more pronounced in boys, some of whom also behaved poorly, particularly in Key Stage 3. Most students collaborate well with one another, particularly during practical activities, always working safely. The majority of written work at all attainment levels is satisfactory, but there is evidence of untidy writing, diagrams and unfinished homework.

24. In nine out of every ten lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better and in half of these, the teaching was good. The best teaching was in the sixth form and in half the lessons seen at Key Stage 4. Within Key Stage 3, the majority of teaching was satisfactory with a minority of lessons where it was good. The best teaching here is characterised by high expectations of all students, irrespective of their attainment. Tasks set are varied, challenging and used to reinforce and develop understanding. Teachers use key words, practical tasks and summaries to strengthen students' awareness of scientific concepts or set additional work such as calculations on pressure in unfamiliar contexts. Homework is used not merely to complete classwork but to extend it, such as writing a newspaper article to explain the greenhouse effect. Less effective teaching occurs where students are given mundane tasks, such as copying notes, or where the majority of students are not engaged on task or where teachers' questions only target a few individuals. In many such cases, the teaching is too teacher-directed and students need to be given more opportunities to take part in formal group work and reporting back in order to develop their language skills.
25. Since the last inspection, the management has improved greatly as a result of the appointment of a new head of faculty, and many of the issues raised in the last report have been fully addressed. This has had a considerable impact in developing the long-term planning and policies of the faculty, reorganising and improving accommodation and resources and determining the direction of future development. Systems put in place to monitor the work of the staff, to improve the range of homework set and to involve students more in assessing their own progress all have the potential for further beneficial development.

## OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### Art

26. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is good. Attainment is in line with national expectations in half of the lessons seen. It is above expectations in the remainder, as when Year 9 students demonstrated clean, fresh colour blending and Year 8 students were able accurately to relate information about Van Gogh's life and replicate his style by using bamboo pens which they had made. Most of the students in Key Stage 3 make good progress in the targets set for them though girls are often make better and more consistent progress than boys.
27. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is good. The percentage of students achieving A\*- C grades at GCSE has risen from 35 per cent of entries in 1997 to 58 per cent in 1999. Although this is still below the national average of 63 per cent, it represents a substantial improvement and predicted grades for 2000 suggest that this improvement will continue. Overall, students achieve better grades in art than they do in their other subjects. In recent years, girls have performed better than boys in GCSE by one or two grades. They are using sketchbooks effectively to record their researches and they show confidence in combining a wide range of materials in their finished work. Particular strengths in attainment at this stage are the effective interweaving of Attainment Target 2, the knowledge and understanding of artists, with Attainment Target 1, investigating and making, especially through the use of visits and visitors. The imaginative and expressive aspects of art are well-developed in students' work at this stage and their 3-dimensional work shows flair and imagination in its design and decoration. Students make good progress in art in Key Stage 4, though there are variations within the groups. The lower attainers are encouraged and are able to make satisfactory progress while the higher attainers are able to take fuller advantage of the variety of stimuli offered and so make very good progress.
28. Attainment in the small groups of sixth form students is also good. Their research into themes is thorough and they effectively integrate their studies of artists' work into their own practical projects. Students in their sixth form years make good progress, as their broadening knowledge and their personal strengths in various media lead them to develop a distinctive style in their work. Students with special educational needs are able to make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them.
29. The attitudes and behaviour of students are good. They are generally polite and courteous in their dealings with adults and peers. They collaborate well when required and offer help to each other. All age groups show interest in their work.
30. The quality of teaching across the age range is good. In Key Stage 3, it was good in three out of every four lessons seen and satisfactory in the remainder. A good variety of teaching styles is used to develop knowledge, skills and classroom routines. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, teaching is good throughout. Although most of the teaching seen at these stages was support for individual students, the interest, self sufficiency and self motivation of the Key Stage 4 groups and the confident painterly style of the sixth form work is clear evidence of some very good teaching earlier in the projects. Particular strengths in teaching are the good knowledge and understanding of the subject shared by all staff and especially the positive, enthusiastic and often animated manner in which they encourage their students. In Key Stage 3, lessons are well structured and the longer projects in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are similarly well planned, with a good choice of artists to illustrate themes and productive use of visits to major galleries and museums.
31. The systems for assessing and recording students' work are satisfactory though there are variations across the key stages. Sixth form students use A level marking criteria to gain a clear indication of their level of attainment and areas for improvement. The department does not currently have a standardised folio of graded work for Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure consistency of teacher assessment or for students to compare their work and to set specific targets.
32. The present accommodation for the department is unsatisfactory due to the recent loss of a large studio,



resulting in over-crowded facilities, limiting the range of media in which students can work. Storage facilities in the remaining three rooms are inadequate for the displaced materials, equipment and examples of students' work. This constrains movement around the rooms and restricts the scale at which students can work compared to previous years. The staff show great commitment and resourcefulness in continuing to offer a wide range of media and, by the effective use of display, creating an exciting and stimulating environment for learning. This is a good department, which fosters the creativity and imagination of its students.

#### 143. **Business Studies**

33. Attainment in business studies at Key Stage 4 is below national expectation and below that of other subjects in the college. The percentage of students gaining grades A\* to C at GCSE in 1999 was less than half of the national figure. There was a marginal improvement in 1999 compared with the previous year. In comparison with GCSE results at the time of the last inspection, with 66 per cent of students attaining the higher grades of A\* to C, there has been a marked deterioration in attainment. Year 11 students have a basic knowledge of business studies but are limited in their ability to apply that knowledge and use technical language. Skills of analysis and evaluation are not well developed and lack depth. Attainment in the current Year 11 is unlikely to improve, given the level of non-specialist teaching within the subject. Attainment at A level is below the national average. Only two thirds of students achieved a grade between A and E last summer.
34. In Advanced and Intermediate GNVQ in business, attainment is above the national average. Completion rates exceeded national figures by 17 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. GNVQ business students produce well-organised portfolios of work which meet the course criteria well. Students who followed the leisure and tourism programme performed below the level expected, with only one third of the students achieving the full award at intermediate level. Whilst the sample size for GCSE is adequate for reliable comparisons with the national picture, the numbers of students taking A level and GNVQ are quite small, therefore statistical comparison is less secure. Sample size at both A level and GNVQ prevents the identification of any significant trends. There is no significant variation in the performance of girls and boys or students from ethnic minorities. The distribution in classes in terms of gender and ethnicity was equal among the groups.
35. At Key Stage 4, the progress of high, average and low attainers is unsatisfactory. High attainers are able to identify basic concepts, for example specialisation and the division of labour, when considering economic problems, but they were not able to recognise their potential solution using specialist terms. Average attainers and low attainers were unable to identify the factors of production in a lesson focussing on planned and market economies. Low attainers and those with special educational needs had difficulty with some activities, as worksheets were too difficult for them to grasp. For example, when asked what they had personally bought in terms of goods and services in the last month, students over-simplified their answers, and were unable to explain why they had answered in this way. Progress in post-16 courses is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, showing a direct correlation with the quality of teaching. Health and social care students preparing for a health presentation to reception age children, demonstrated good planning skills, developing and refining their ideas throughout the session.
36. The majority of students at Key Stage 4 show interest in the subject, working well with each other and, when opportunities are presented, independently. Recruitment rates to business studies courses are good. Students sustain concentration well unless there is a lack of challenge in the set task. Higher attainers completed an activity on memoranda of association well within the time allowed and as a result became restless. Overall behaviour, relationships and the ability to work with others are all satisfactory. Sixth form students on A level and GNVQ courses have mature attitudes towards the work, peers and teachers.
37. Teaching in seventy per cent of lessons is at least sound, with all lessons in the sixth form being satisfactory or better. However, at Key Stage 4, the majority of lessons are unsatisfactory. The department is staffed by both specialist and non-specialist teachers. Where the teaching is satisfactory, teachers have a secure grasp of the subject, sound plans and clear aims. There is good pace to the lesson, relationships engender mutual respect and work is pitched at a level to stimulate the student. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, subject knowledge is weak, lesson planning is inadequate, and teachers' knowledge of the meaning and spelling of

technical terms and means of making business calculations falls below an acceptable standard. Student progress is hindered in unsatisfactory lessons by inappropriately targeted tasks and poor time management. Insufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring students understand the aims of the lesson and reviewing whether they have been achieved. All staff in the department manage the students effectively and maintain sound levels of discipline. There is an inconsistency in the assessment of students' work, a lack of developmental comment and inadequate attention paid to spelling and grammatical errors. Recently introduced monitoring by the new Head of Department is beginning to improve the quality of marking. Long and medium term planning is in place but it does not contain an appropriate level of detail in order to ensure effective teaching from non-specialist staff.

38. The department is beginning to benefit from new leadership. There is increasing and effective use of data, which is analysed to identify ways of improving attainment in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Students are closely involved in the revised recording systems for vocational and key skills units within GNVQ. GCSE, GCE and GNVQ courses are adequately resourced, although the out-of-date computer equipment limits the amount of integrated work at Key Stage 4 and prohibits sixth form students transferring work easily between home and college, where many have more modern equipment. Research work for A level and GNVQ is restricted by the difficulty of accessing the Internet within the department. Good use is made of the business community through visits and activities and plans will develop this further, as the head of department becomes more established within the area. The amount of accommodation is barely adequate; the health and social care group have no set room, given the increasing numbers choosing the courses offered. The fabric of the building is poor as well as much of the furnishing. Base rooms provide adequate space for most groups, however the popularity of the subject has created some large GCSE classes. The department is well managed by an enthusiastic and able department head who carries the dual responsibility for coordinating GNVQ and business education well. A clear vision is evident in development planning, matching the college's aim of increasing the range of vocational courses, particularly Part 1 GNVQ.

#### 149. **Design and technology**

39. The attainment of students in design and technology at the end of both key stages in 1999 is above national averages. At Key Stage 3, this is in terms of the number of students reaching level 5 and above, for the combined assessment for designing and making. There is a clear trend of improvement over the last three years, which is also seen in current products and lessons. Although girls have previously outperformed boys, recent results show this gap has closed. Students show a good knowledge of the design process for their age. In the specialist areas of food, textiles, resistant materials and graphic products, they are able to design and make products in a variety of materials. A significant number can work with precision, making and evaluating their products, and suggesting ways to improve them, as in the weather vane and sports trophy projects. Some students have some outstanding work in their documentation, as in Year 9 designs for a moisture detector, a wall hanging for storage, and a study of food products for toddlers.
40. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in technology has risen over the last three years. There has been some variance in attainment in specialisms, in terms of number of students gaining both A\* to C, and A\* to G in GCSE examinations. Attainment in 1999 in systems and control is very much above, food technology well above national average, with resistant materials and graphics in line, and textiles below national averages. Students' current projects and folders, including textiles, show attainment that continues to be above national averages, taking an overall view of the key stage. Over the last three years, food has shown the greatest improvement, with significant rises in graphics and resistant materials, a drop in attainment in textiles, whilst systems results have been steady. Technology results are better than most other subjects in the college and better than results in similar schools, for both boys and girls. Girls outperform boys but by a margin similar to national differences. There is some very good work in many areas, such as designs for a light detector, a kimono, a candle holder and graphics work based on cars. A low attaining pupil's work for a storage box shows good presentation, enhanced by the use of CAD software.
41. Attainment at the end of the sixth form is currently in line with national averages and course requirements, although the group sizes are very small. Present work shows some good design, but organising work and

meeting schedules is behind target. There has been some outstanding individual project work in A level Design based on graphics in recent years.

42. Students' progress in lessons is good across both key stages. It is satisfactory overall in the sixth form. Students' knowledge and skill increases rapidly in the earlier years of Key Stage 3. There are some contributions to numeracy when students carry out nutritional analysis and mark and measure materials and learn formal drawing techniques. In a Year 8 lesson, students design a net for a model vehicle, and develop two-point perspective. In systems at Key Stage 4, there is very good progress, when students are given careful guidance to use a variety of sources for their research and analysis. Students with special needs make good progress, equal to their peers, helped by most teachers' efforts to build their confidence through individual attention. In a resistant materials lesson, good progress took place when the teacher helped students to use interactive programs. This was used to consolidate their knowledge of plastic, wood and metal.
43. Pupil's attitudes are good at both key stages. They listen and carry out instructions carefully, using equipment and machines responsibly. When using the brazing hearth, lathe and pillar drill in Year 9, students work safely to complete the metal parts of a weather vane. In food, they work to deadlines, and participate readily with tasting and sensory analysis. They are able to take part in discussion in class, sharing ideas and appreciate the work done to improve their knowledge of healthy diets. Students show pride in finishing products to a high standard and many put in much time after college to complete project work.
44. Teaching in design and technology is good overall. Teaching is always satisfactory and half is good. One quarter is very good. Most teachers have a strong presence. Some staff are still establishing relationships with the class, in terms of establishing a uniform response to their expectations of high standards. Teachers provide clear explanations when introducing new processes. A demonstration introducing tapping metals was concise with well directed questioning. All teachers have a good knowledge of making in their subject specialism and deliver lessons with enthusiasm. Lessons are taught with close attention to safety and hygiene. Although there is little detail in some individual education plans, teachers clearly direct support staff and provide good teaching to most students who have special educational needs or are low attainers, through the careful use of setting, and appropriate tasks. Relationships are good, and help progress in most Key Stage 4 courses, as in a well paced Year 11 food demonstration, where there was a brisk revision of methods of making cakes. One shortcoming was where high attainers were not given sufficiently high level tasks. An example here was a fairly trivial piece of homework to evaluate a cookie and an undemanding evaluation of an electronic badge.
45. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is broad and balanced, although 'systems' is not offered in the current Year 10. Assessment and methods of targeting progress are good, and there is now good use of IT at both key stages. Although some of the staff are newly qualified, there is a broad range of experience in the department, and good support structures. There is only incidental reflection on the ingenuity of technology or the attractiveness of materials, but social development is well promoted, with links with Brunel University in the sixth form, and at Key Stage 4, specialist visits. In graphics, there are productive links with the community to design products for the millennium.
46. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant rise in standards at both key stages and these improvements have been recognised with the Technology College Trust's 'Susan Faye Award'. The head of department is providing very good management, with new systems of curriculum review, monitoring coursework and targeting to improving attainment. Whilst including many new young staff, the department is working well as a team, providing an all-embracing ethos in the five specialist technology areas. For example, designing in food and resistant materials at Key Stage 3 is consolidated and taken forward later in the year when students study textiles. The department has benefited from much new IT equipment and is now using this for control, CAD/CAM and research. There is still a shortage of rooms, especially for food and graphic products. There is still room for improvement in terms of innovative product design, using the modern equipment to the full. Vocational courses, based on strong, local industrial links are not yet in place. The department has good capacity to improve in these areas.

## 157. Geography

47. Standards of attainment in geography are in line with national expectations across all three key stages. The proportion of students reaching the expected National Curriculum level 5 in teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly higher than the national average and a significant improvement on the previous year. However, teachers acknowledge that their assessments of students' National Curriculum levels in 1998 were not wholly reliable. GCSE results at A\* to C grades in 1999 are close to national averages and higher than the average results for the college in all other subjects. There were insufficient candidates at GCE 'A' level to make a reliable statistical comparison with national results. Predictions by the department indicate that the picture is one of improvement, particularly for boys.

48. In Year 7, most students are able to recognise and use Ordnance Survey symbols in the construction of a map, showing understanding of the basic concepts of direction and scale. Higher attaining students are able to construct a polar diary showing good understanding of direction on a world scale with a significant information and communication technology content. In Year 8, most students are able to refer to both the advantages and disadvantages of the flood patterns of the River Nile in Egypt in written work on the water cycle. By Year 9, students write in greater depth on the demographic transition of regions or countries, using statistical information as evidence to support conclusions. Most students contribute to group discussions in identifying areas of high or low population density, using photographs as evidence. Lower attaining students need extra help to handle data.

49. Most of Year 10 students can make comparisons on the quality of living standards between areas using census data as indicators. Students in one class conducted an urban study of Leicester, enhanced by graphical illustrations. Students in another class demonstrated an understanding of depopulation and are competent in assessing information from the computer network in a case study of a remote island in the Hebrides. The high attaining students are capable of drafting without assistance the front-page articles of their newspaper on the implications of depopulation for a community. In Year 11, high attaining students write structured essays on management of the ecosystem, featuring an area of the Tundra in Alaska. Local project work on the River Pang produce passages of good extended writing, where students employ a range of statistical methods to analyse their field work measurements. The majority is capable of using information and communication technology to enhance the presentation of graphs and text. Lower attaining students have difficulty with extended writing but can answer short data response questions competently.

50. Students in the sixth form have a good grasp of advanced technical vocabulary in writing essays on aspects of the challenge of the natural environment. The best individual studies are very well planned and researched, with clear hypotheses. Data is presented with good quality maps and the use of statistical methods. Most students use computers to good effect in presenting their work. Both physical and human geography work in course files and lessons shows good technical understanding in topics ranging from urban models to glaciation.

51. Progress overall is good at Key Stage 3; it is never less than satisfactory. In Year 7, most students make good progress in the consolidation of map skills and in learning to use the world atlas as a source of reference. In Year 8, students make progress in the application of numeracy skills such as the interpretation of a graph showing the months of the year when irrigation is required because of the fall in the water level of the River Nile. By Year 9, progress is generally good because of the amount of written work done over time. Lower attainers, including those with special needs, struggle to cope with the worksheets and textbooks because of low literacy and numeracy skills. Overall progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good, both in lessons and over time. In Years 10 and 11, numeracy skills are well developed, as presentation in graphical form features prominently in project work supporting conclusions. High attaining students are fully extended in accessing information from the computer programmes and text. Lower attaining students make good progress in handling data with support. In Years 12 and 13, there is evidence of students developing their research skills and the handling of data to support balanced arguments. Most students cope well with the intellectual content and the large amount of work covered.

52. Students' responses at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory and often good. In most lessons, students know that they are expected to be well behaved and quiet when the teacher is talking. In a few lessons, students are inclined

to call out or to talk among themselves. Overall students are generally prepared to make an effort to do well and their concentration is sustained throughout the lesson when challenged. Responses at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are good. Students willingly respond to questions and enjoy collaborative learning opportunities. The majority of students takes a pride in their work and produce interesting and attractive illustrations in their fieldwork projects. There are particularly strong relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form, promoting good progress.

53. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good; none is less than satisfactory. There is lively teaching and, usually, good organisation with timed tasks and a range of teaching methods and activities. Question and answer sessions are used constructively to assess students' understanding. Teachers are aware of different levels of attainment and sometimes provide different materials for low attaining and those with special educational needs. The quality of marking is consistent and supportive. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. Aims are shared with students with key areas shown on the white board. Teachers are secure in knowledge. Even when there is a limited range of teaching methods, progression is logical to build up knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned with targets set and timed. In one lesson, for example, there was good collaboration between the subject teacher and the Head of Information and Communication Technology as they worked together to provide a series of valuable learning experiences for the students. Teaching at 'A' level is good. Such teaching is characterised by good specialist knowledge together with personal support and monitoring of students. There are a variety of activities with opportunities for discussion and expectations are high. Marking is generally supportive and consistent. Homework is appropriately set to support learning and the project fieldwork is challenging.

54. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the time given to geography is adequate. There has been good progress in the subject since the last inspection report. The schemes of work have been revised, providing more opportunities for active learning for students in well-planned lessons. Assessment arrangements are now good with elements of pupil self-assessment. A wider range of teaching materials to support low attaining students is also seen as an area for development. The use of computers is well developed but the further application of information and communication technology will enhance pupil drafting and research skills. Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to students' spiritual, moral and social development with a focus on the multicultural nature of society. The head of subject provides good leadership to a committed team of teachers. There are good resources and linked accommodation that bring cohesion to the subject within the humanities faculty.

165.

## **History**

55. Standards of attainment in history are in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form; they are marginally below average at Key Stage 4. The most recent National Curriculum teacher assessments for 1999 at Key Stage 3 are significantly below average but these are now being determined on a more secure basis than was previously the case. There has not been a clear trend in history examination results in recent years, though the 1999 GCSE results suggested a dip in standards, in part due to staffing conditions.

56. A strong feature of the work in history is the way in which students develop their investigative skills and can seek sources of information for use as evidence in their written work to support ideas. Students in Year 7 are able to describe what life was really like in the Middle Ages by examining contradictory sources. In Year 8, students of average and above average attainment identify sources of information from the text and tell the difference between persons who are genuinely poor from those who prefer to live from begging in the Tudor period. Some lower attainers do not fully understand the vocabulary they read in books and become confused when asked to list information in categories according to chronology. By Year 9, the majority of students can use historical evidence to write an imaginary letter as the last Mughal Emperor of India, explaining to his people why he had asked for the protection of the British Empire. Higher attainers produce well-structured written work with the standard of presentation enhanced by the use of computers. In Year 10, students are able to talk about the events of Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland drawing on evidence which had been well written in earlier essays. Most can accurately interpret a graph showing the connections between the violent death rate and political action over time. Students are competent to discuss complex issues in pairs or groups, such as suggesting a course of action to be taken by the British Government on the collapse of power sharing in Northern Ireland.

57. In Year 11, the higher attaining students writing on events in Germany in the 1930s are able to recognise that the persecution of the Jews had featured in earlier periods in history and that the Nazi Party in Germany had played on prejudice in its policy of persecution and genocide. The majority of students are inclined to produce short written accounts of events of a factual nature, but lack a sense of balance and depth. The use of information and communication technology is in its early stages and students' research skills are not yet well developed. In the sixth form, there is the required level of analytical arguments in students' essays and document work. The small number of students in the class is able to cross reference historical sources in testing the reliability of opinion. In Year 12, students are able to evaluate complex issues such as their interpretation of a Punch cartoon satirising the predicament of the Prime Minister Peel over the Corn Laws. Year 13 students can draw on their historical knowledge to suggest explanations for the attitudes of vested interest groups in Ireland to the American Way of Independence. This level of attainment has yet to be converted into examination success matching predicted grades, as there were no 'A' level candidates in history in 1999.

58. Overall progress is sound, on balance, at Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 9, students' investigative and communication skills have improved, as seen in well-balanced imaginative accounts drawing on source material. They are producing more extended writing, although some still need to include more detail. Progress is sound rather than good at Key Stage 3 because it is inconsistent. Occasionally, students did not work steadily because of poor lesson planning or implementation.

59. At Key Stage 4, the progress of students is at least satisfactory and often good in lessons. The best progress was seen in a Year 10 lesson, where students working in groups used their previous knowledge to examine critically source evidence before arriving at their conclusions on the conflict in Northern Ireland. By the end of the key stage, students are able to develop a wider range of writing styles and give a more balanced view of historical events. The progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Progress in the sixth form is consistently good. This is achieved in no small part by the skilful use of questions to challenge the thinking of the students. The students participate actively in lessons and there is evidence made of good progress in researching source material in the preparation of personal assignments.

60. Students' response in lessons is good overall. They enjoy their lessons and behaviour is good in practically all the lessons seen. Students willingly respond to questions and are keen to participate in discussions. Concentration is usually sustained throughout the lesson and the majority takes pride in their presentation. At Key Stage 3 there is some variation in students' response, which is linked closely to teaching skills. At Key Stage 4, students work well together in groups, but a minority shows a relaxed attitude to learning with no sense of urgency. There are good relationships between students and teachers, particularly in the sixth form, where they promote improved rates of progress.

61. Teaching is good overall. It is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of history is a strength, particularly in the sixth form. Teachers have high expectations of the amount of work students are expected to undertake but they also provide structure and personal support. They spend time in lessons checking on and extending understanding, which helps students to consolidate and build on their skills. The department's policy of having different activities and a mix of individual, group and whole class work is clearly visible and effective in most lessons. Question and answer sessions are used constructively to assess students' understanding. In most lessons, planning is thorough but there are times when the tasks have not been sufficiently structured to meet the needs of lower attaining students. Marking is consistently encouraging with the focus on the end of unit assessment.

62. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the time given to history is adequate. The department has identified areas where improvement is needed. Since the last inspection, schemes of work and teaching strategies have been revised to foster more enquiry based activities. This will be further enhanced by planned developments in the use of information and communication technology. The use of assessment is more secure and a promising start has been made on pupil targeting and self-assessment. The use of assessment in lesson planning is not yet sufficiently developed to meet the needs of lower attaining students. History makes a satisfactory contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as it takes into consideration different ethnic backgrounds of the students. The department is well led and a team approach is

fostered. There are good resources and accommodation for present purposes and they are used effectively to assist learning.

### 173. **Information and communications technology (IT)**

63. The attainment of students in IT at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average in terms of the number of students reaching level 5 or above. There has been a trend of improvement over the last two years. Girls perform better than boys, by a margin significantly higher than the national difference. Students are best at using word processors and spreadsheets, and are able successfully to model problems such as a profit and loss for a college tuck shop. Some students can perform a mail merge. However, few students are able to design documents that combine a wide range of sources, and consider audience fully.
64. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below the national averages, both in examination results in 1999 and in the level of students' capability in IT. It is below standards reached in other subjects in the college, and with similar colleges. In the GCSE option, the attainment of students in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national averages, in terms of higher grades A\* to C, and in A\* to G grades. Students are able to design solutions for tasks such as when producing a logo and business documents. Other Key Stage 4 students do not follow the national programme of study, although the proportion in Year 10 is much lower than Year 11. Many current Year 11 students who undertook the Computer Literacy and Information Technology course in 1999 show some high levels of accuracy in their use of word processors, databases and spreadsheets. They have worked towards meeting the technology college target for 2000 in this respect. However, their broader knowledge and understanding of more advanced features is well below average in comparison with students taking courses that follow the national guidelines. Students do not show sufficient development in their application of IT in English, mathematics, and history and geography. In modern foreign languages, students are beginning to develop their application of IT and in design and technology, it is good.
65. At the end of the sixth form, attainment is in line with national averages. Students know a wide range of advanced skills, and can design sophisticated linked tables in database work, and macros for spreadsheets. Descriptions of projects are often rigorous, and in previous years there has been some outstanding documentation. Some students have designed successful systems used in the college library and learning support. There persists a lack of discrimination when choosing appropriate software, and designing documents in Year 12, which contain a preponderance of commercial art work.
66. Students make good progress across Key Stage 3 in lessons. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, as in learning how to format work in Year 7. However, some students who are well skilled in using word processors, through work at Key Stage 2 or through using a computer at home, are not brought forward fast enough. This is due to over-use of whole class teaching, or lack of tasks well matched to students' learning needs. Where teachers have high expectations, as in a Year 8 spreadsheet lesson, higher attainers make good progress, rapidly consolidating their Year 7 work.
67. Progress across Key Stage 4 is currently unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, those students not taking a GCSE only study IT in their normal subject lessons. This work does not feature activities in IT that improve students' skills, such as allowing application in the use of modelling, measurement or use of advanced features. Students taking GCSE IT as an option make satisfactory progress. In current theory lessons, teachers provide well-prepared materials to allow students to widen and improve their knowledge of data security and network topology. Their project work in Year 10 shows a higher ability to research and analyse tasks, and choose from software to design solutions. They do not become sufficiently discerning in their use of artwork or learn restrained styling in their documents.
68. Progress in the sixth form is good, with students who have not previously taken GCSE benefiting from teaching that provides suitable tasks, to bring them forward. Other students also make good progress, and some use links with local industry to help them research their work such as a project based on data handling at the local branch of a large national retailer.

69. Pupils' attitudes to information technology are good. They listen and carry out instructions, and use equipment responsibly, as in a lesson using control software. Students readily use the learning resource areas from very early before college to the evening and greatly appreciate the new Internet facilities, taking care in accessing web-sites. In Years 7 and 9, some students who have experience of using computers at home feel the work is too easy, and would prefer to learn more advanced skills beyond basic word processing.
70. Teaching in IT is always at least satisfactory, being good or better in half of lessons. In some lessons, teachers are unaware of students' levels of attainment and are not familiar with exemplary material, which shows typical standards for each level of attainment. The best teaching is well directed and has a good pace, as in a Year 11 lesson where students with a range of attainment were given individual help and appropriate targets for project work. Nearly all teachers have a very good understanding of the software, but some lack experience of a wider range of packages such as full multi-media and web page design. Some teaching could set higher expectations, recognising the skills of students who use their own computers or have gained skills in primary colleges. The majority of resources are well written, with tasks based on some cross-curricular themes, and efficient use of template files on the network. Some material such as a graphics module in Year 8 is purely skills based, and misses opportunities such as to link with the art curriculum.
71. The curriculum is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4, as information technology is only offered as an option. Students in some subjects develop and apply their use of IT with rigour but this provision does not cover all the Key Stage 4 programme of study. Work carried out in other subjects such as science and design and technology is not used in the Key Stage 3 teacher assessment to arrive at a rounded level. There is no portfolio of benchmark materials for use within Key Stage 3 to allow teachers to cross moderate and set targets related to the levels of the National Curriculum.
72. Management of IT is good, with clear monitoring of Key Stage 4 and sixth form students, effective supervision of the well qualified, computer operations technicians and strong support of specialist IT teachers. The department has extensive links with local colleges and the community, and provides successful IT training courses for many neighbouring colleges, fulfilling some of the objectives of the college as regards its local 'family'. Management of the subject in the college as a whole has some shortcomings. There is not yet a complete audit of cross-curricular IT in the college leading to some inefficiency in duplicated provision. Statutory requirements have not been met. Students not opting for IT at Key Stage 4 do not receive a report of their progress.
73. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements. Standards have improved at Key Stage 3 and 4 and there is now good sixth form provision. Teaching standards have improved with far better deployment of staff. Every pupil has a password to a modern network of computers with up to date software, including Internet access and the facility for e-mail. The college has a developing Intranet, and trains local colleges. Hardware provision is now excellent, with an impressive pupil/computer ratio of 5:1 - above the National average. Documentation is much improved although cross-curricular provision is not yet audited or coordinated well enough.

184.

**184. Modern foreign languages: French, German and Urdu**

74. Of the 40 students entered for the GCSE examination in French in 1998, forty per cent achieved grades in the range A\* to C, which was below the national average for all maintained secondary colleges. There was a considerable gap between girls' attainment in achieving these higher grades, above the national average, and that of boys, which was well below it. Forty-seven per cent of the 58 students entered for German achieved grades in the range A\* to C, close to the national average. Boys' attainment was slightly higher than the national average for boys, whilst girls' performance was below their average. Both boys' and girls' performance was higher in French and German, relative to their average performance across the range of their other subjects. In 1999, the number of students entered for the GCSE examination in French more than



doubled but the number of students entered for German dropped to 10. Of the 92 students entered for French, only a quarter achieved grades in the higher range. Eighty per cent of those entered for German achieved higher grades. Students entered for the GCSE examination in Urdu achieved higher grades in one third of cases.

75. Attainment is below national expectations in Key Stage 3. Forty per cent of students achieved level 4 – the national expectation - and above in the 1999 Year 9 teacher assessments, with girls achieving twice the number of level 4 results than the boys. This compares with almost two thirds achieving that level nationally. Higher and middle attaining students understand when the teacher addresses them in the target language. Lower attaining students are often unable to understand without considerable support. Very few students use the target language themselves for routine class communication. Higher attaining students are able to retain and recall new vocabulary introduced during the lesson. By Year 9, they are able to take part in conversations of several exchanges and write longer passages in the language using tenses other than the present. Lower attaining students have difficulty in pronouncing and copying words correctly. Attainment is higher in lessons in Key Stage 4. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining students are able to read and understand information and then give their opinions in the language. The majority of students in Year 11 are able to write extensively in the language and use IT to word-process their work. Higher attaining students are able to use past and future tenses with a high degree of accuracy, whilst lower attainers' work is usually comprehensible but contains a large number of grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. Attainment in sixth form classes is below the national expectation. Students need considerable support to understand more complex texts and their contributions lack fluency and grammatical accuracy.
76. Progress in lessons is satisfactory or good throughout the college. Progress of all groups of students is as expected when the focus of the lesson is on the introduction, revision or recall of new vocabulary and phrases or simple substitution exercises. Where work is more demanding and builds on previous learning, higher and average attaining students make greater progress than lower attaining students. This is especially the case in classes with a wide range of ability, and when all students are working on the same task.
77. Behaviour and attitudes are good. Students settle quickly in lessons and co-operate well with the teacher and one another. The majority of students show interest in their work and work hard throughout lessons, although some lower attaining students have difficulty in concentrating for long periods of time.
78. Teaching is satisfactory or good throughout the college. All teachers in the department have good subject knowledge of at least one foreign language, although the organisation of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 has resulted in some German classes being taught by non-specialists. Teachers have comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. Lessons are well planned and structured, and are conducted at a brisk pace. Students are given clear guidance about what they are doing and how they are expected to do it. Resources and equipment, such as the language laboratory, are used appropriately and skilfully. Teachers make good use of the target language for routine class communication but do not insist sufficiently on pupil use of French, German or Urdu for this purpose. There is insufficient learning support for lower attaining students. All teachers in the department have access to comprehensive assessment information about pupil attainment, and they are beginning to use it to inform planning and teaching. Students' work is regularly marked and assessed. Homework is regularly set. Good use is made of French and German assistants.
79. The modern language curriculum is carefully and comprehensively planned, but there is insufficient match to students' different learning needs by task within each course unit and appropriate National Curriculum levels for each stage are not specified. The head of department gives a clear lead to teachers in relation to teaching and assessment methodology. Development planning is good. The department is well equipped and resourced and has a modern and attractive language laboratory, access to computers and satellite television.
80. Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing issues raised in the last inspection report, for example in relation to the level of pupil response. A number of challenges remain, in particular the need to raise standards of attainment, increase the use of the target language by students, and develop learning support which is well matched to students' needs.

## 191. Music

81. In the most recent GCSE examinations in music, results were well below the national average, and the trend has been consistently below average in recent years. A level results, similarly, were well below the national average. End of Key Stage 3 assessments show that fewer students are achieving expected levels than the national average.
82. By the end of Key Stage 3, on evidence gained from classroom observation and from a scrutiny of work, students have gained good standards of attainment. They are developing precise aural skills, and can recognise elements of form, beat, rhythm and instrumentation when they listen to music. They are notably accurate when they have to do rhythmic dictation. The quality of singing is very good; both boys and girls sing naturally, confidently and with clear diction and good intonation. Performance and composition skills are being thoroughly developed, largely through an extensive use of the music technology. Students use the correct fingering on keyboards and this eventually facilitates rapid progress. Higher attaining students can successfully write and scan words to be set to music, compose up to a sixteen-bar melody for those words, and add up to five major or minor chords to accompany that melody. Lower attaining students, and those with special needs, are given less demanding tasks in composition work such as writing words and rhythms for raps, and they can achieve satisfying results with these tasks.
83. Standards of attainment are satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In practical terms, there is a wide gap between the competent technical ability of a few students in each year, and the elementary performance standards of rather more students in the groups. This diversity of practical attainment may account for comments made at the last inspection, and also for the most recent examination results. Current examination students are expected to take individual instrumental or vocal instruction in order to address this issue and raise standards. Students of all attainment are developing secure composition techniques, being able, for example, to improvise confidently and write on a given sequence of basic chords. They are familiar with the use of the pentatonic, whole-tone, chromatic and blues scales, and can identify strophic form, ternary form and the use of theme and variations. Standards of sight-reading by the higher attaining students are good. Analytical skills are well developed; all students in Year 10, for example, made accurate and meaningful comments about the form, harmony and context of a Beatles composition which was played to them.
84. Evidence in the classroom, and gained through a scrutiny of files of work, show standards of attainment with sixth form students to be good. Practical standards of performance are at least in line with the national average. Harmony skills in composition are well developed, with students, for example, being able confidently to use conventions such as counterpoint, augmentation, diminution, suspensions and canon. Score analysis is well focused and accurate. Students have good research skills and a secure knowledge of historical music development.
85. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3: satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and good progress in the sixth form. The progress they are making at all key stages must account for the current standards of attainment, and needs to be maintained. At Key Stage 3, the quality of students' singing improves after there has been attention to good voice production. They use their ears well and learn new melodies very quickly. In practical work, a variety of differentiated tasks are set for students of varying ability. Lower attaining students can make substantial progress, both over modules of work and within lessons, when working on raps with contexts which appeal to them. Equally, higher attaining students are extended, and can make good progress, in aural recognition when they are expected to recognise compound time signatures while the rest of the class is dealing with simple time signatures. Composition tasks are always appropriate and open-ended so that all can make maximum development. A group of higher attaining girls, for example, wrote a song, added C, G and A minor chords to it, and created a Caribbean atmosphere with great success on keyboards over a period of three weeks. The majority of Key Stage 4 students start their course at a low base because many are very elementary instrumentalists or vocalists. The progress they make over the course is variable, but is at least satisfactory, and is good with the higher attaining performers. The development from theory to practice in practical work is secure, and students can transfer what they have learnt into composition quite

quickly within individual lessons. Specific help is given to those finding musical literacy difficult to deal with: a group of Year 11 students made notable progress in one lesson when they worked with the steel pans on a Caribbean composition. Presentation and interpretation of the music on which they worked were both impressive. Sixth form students are highly motivated, and their singular interest and well-developed research skills ensure that they develop steadily through the course.

86. Students have good attitudes to music across all key stages, and this is particularly reflected in that the music suite is always full of young performers wanting to improve their techniques with private and group practice during breaks and lunch hours. In lessons, students listen closely to the taught part, then move efficiently into group work. They display considerable motivation and independence, and work most co-operatively when they are expected to. They appear to enjoy the varied aspects of the syllabus, and particularly the practical work; working with the steel pans is always popular. Occasionally a few boys in some classes lose their concentration, and need to be kept on task. In general, there is no difference in attitude to the subject either by gender or ethnic origin. Music lessons are simply enjoyed by the majority.
87. The quality of teaching is good across Key Stages 3 and 4, and it has some very good features; in the sixth form, the teaching is very good. Particular strengths are the use of successful methodology, of very effective team teaching, of pacing and timing, of differentiated targets for specific students, and of the raising of students' interest and curiosity. Lessons are carefully planned and relevant, and attractive, informative worksheets are prepared. There is always a progressive development through each lesson, and time is allocated at the end for performances to take place after practical preparation: this is good practice as it keeps students on target. Teachers have high expectations of what students of all ability should be able to achieve, and they continuously assess their development, and move them forward. Homework is monitored and regularly marked.
88. Music technology features in the curriculum at all key stages, and is often used highly effectively. The balance between technology and creative music making is not yet fully clear in the schemes of work. There are very good opportunities to take three different music courses in the sixth form, but attention should be given to raising standards in light of recent results. Fully comprehensive assessment procedures need to be put in place on the return of the head of department early next term. Delivery of the curriculum is, at present, impeded by the fact that there are insufficient keyboards for students to work individually when two classes are being taught at the same time. Standards of performance have been raised in Year 9 since the last inspection, and opportunities are now provided for students to record their compositions on graphic as well as notated and computed scores. This raising of standards in Key Stage 3 needs to be maintained. The department contributes notably to the social and cultural life of the college both within the curriculum and through extra-curriculum activities. At the time of the inspection, an exchange teacher from Australia is very effectively running the department. She has fully taken on all of the responsibilities she inherited, and has made a substantial contribution to the life of the college, and an impact upon the students with whom she has come into contact for a year. She has managed all aspects of the department most successfully, has been a support to the staff within the department, and she has introduced some interesting innovations.

199.

#### 199. **Physical education**

89. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at least in line with, and often exceeds, national expectations. Key Stage 3 students have good command of basic skills and a good knowledge and understanding of the principles of play in basketball and hockey. In movement work, students have satisfactory body management skills and show poise and balance; they are producing creative sequences of movement in gymnastics and dance.
90. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment in the range of games see (volleyball, basketball, netball, rugby and badminton) matches national expectations and students show appropriate development of skills and team play. Examination results for the GCSE in physical education in 1998 and 1999, with only 17.2

and 10.8 per cent of students obtaining A\* to C grade passes, were very significantly below the national average for all maintained colleges, where 48 and 51 per cent of candidates passed at A\* to C levels. Work seen of the students currently following this course indicates that there should be a considerable improvement in the future.

91. Students at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in Key Stage 3 and at least satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Students are learning new skills and consolidating learning skills well; they are developing a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of physical activities. The behaviour and response of most students in both key stages is generally good, though there are a few exceptions and some students lose concentration and are easily distracted. Students have generally positive attitudes and most of them apply themselves diligently to the tasks set. Relationships are good and students work co-operatively in groups and teams.
92. The quality of teaching is consistently high in both key stages. The teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject, They have a good rapport with students and classes are very competently managed. Lessons are well prepared and include appropriately structured practices to develop the work. Much of the teaching is direct, positive and effective; however, few opportunities were provided for students to take responsibility for their own learning and use their initiative in lessons. Appropriate grouping and individual help usually satisfactorily caters for students of different abilities. In some lessons, insufficient consideration is given to this aspect. Best practice was exemplified in a basketball lesson in Year 8, where the teacher's expertise and confident, stimulating and encouraging approach, allied with an excellent rapport with students, effective class management and structured practices, appropriate for students of all attainment, resulted in students making good progress in developing their skills in a lively and enjoyable session.
93. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements, in respect of the range of aspects offered and programmes of study, in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. An opportunity is provided for sixth form students to participate in recreational games and sports. The curriculum provides equality of access and opportunity for all students; however, most lessons are taken as single sex groups and very few girls are opting to take the GCSE course. The extensive and successful extra-curricular sports programme augments the physical education curriculum and helps to raise standards: many students, boys and girls, benefit from this provision. The accommodation for physical education is very good and enhances the learning, encouraging higher standards.
94. The department is effectively managed and led and the staff, with the two newly qualified teachers well integrated into the team, have created a positive learning environment and equality of opportunity for all students. The department is providing good value for money. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of developments and improvements. There is now a virtually new staff team, including a new head of department and this has enabled the creation of a positive and forward-looking ethos for learning within the department, and an overall improvement in the quality of teaching. Different organisation of physical education groupings, with setting by attainment in the subject, is catering better for the learning needs of students with different attainment. There is now a higher level of attainment in practical work in Key Stage 3; and the issue of low GCSE results is being addressed. Liaison with some local primary colleges has been well developed and there has been a considerable increase in the provision of extra-curricular games and sports, from which many boys and girls benefit.

## 205. **Religious Education**

95. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below the expectation of the local Agreed Syllabus. Low curriculum time allocation, insufficient resources and the previous lack of specialist teaching have contributed to this. Students in Year 11 have poorly developed understanding and weak knowledge of the expected content of the Agreed Syllabus. None has been entered for GCSE in the subject, nor is any student following any other course for external accreditation. In their lessons on individual topics, however, students are reaching standards closer to expectation, as with current work on the relation of religious beliefs to social issues. Here, Year 11 students are starting to grasp the complexity of arguments for and against capital

punishment. Progress across the key stage is unsatisfactory overall: it is satisfactory and sometimes better in lessons, but poor over longer periods of time for the reasons given above. In a Year 10 lesson on the parable of the Good Samaritan, students made good progress as they got to grips with the motivation of the various characters in the story. But examination of students' work from previous terms shows that little work has been done in the subject for considerable periods of time, leading to the poor progress.

96. The position at the end of Key Stage 3 is better, but overall attainment is still below expectation. The gap between what the Agreed Syllabus expects and what students know and understand is not as wide as in Year 11. However, as in Year 11, in individual topics, students in Year 9 are achieving closer to expectation. In the Old Testament story of the men and angel in the furnace, for example, students showed that many understood what it was that made the men stand up for their principles, and they were able to give examples from their own lives. This illustrates how teaching is helping students to understand the relationship between religious beliefs and behaviour. Progress in lessons is satisfactory across the key stage, as it is over time in Years 7 and 8. But in Year 9, insufficient time is allocated in the curriculum to enable the Agreed Syllabus to be taught fully, as is the case with Years 10 and 11. In both key stages, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, but not over longer periods of time, except in Years 7 and 8. Occasionally, higher attaining students do not make as much progress as they could, as suitably challenging work is not always ready for them to enable them to move on. Boys and girls progress at a similar rate at both key stages, and reach similar standards, as do students from ethnic minority backgrounds. The college is failing to provide teaching in RE in Years 12 and 13. Consequently, students are denied the opportunity to progress beyond the low attainment at the end of Year 11.
97. While there are variations between classes, though not between key stages, students' responses to RE lessons are mainly good: this is a clear improvement since the previous inspection. Most students are interested and want to make progress. Many try to answer oral questions and a few ask worthwhile questions of their own. The majority of students are well behaved, listen well and are courteous. Written work, though narrow in scope, with little opportunity for individual responses, is generally carefully presented by both boys and girls. However, a few students lack self-discipline, are poorly behaved and disrupt teaching and learning. In some classes, a minority of students makes little effort to get involved: this is particularly the case with girls where they are in the minority in the class.
98. Teaching at both key stages is mainly satisfactory with good feature, and is occasionally very good: this is an improvement since the previous inspection and is the reason why progress in lessons is satisfactory or sometimes better. Secure knowledge of the content of religious education, enthusiasm for teaching it, and firm and friendly relationships are strengths. Lessons usually contain a variety of activities, but the present lack of resources means that the subject cannot be always brought alive for the students. Planning in terms of lessons' content is effective, but insufficient attention is given to meeting the needs of the range of students in a class, including classes which are set by attainment in English or modern foreign languages. Setting has not been chosen by the department and results in classes which contain a high proportion of students with special educational needs, without any learning support being provided: this is making the task of raising standards in RE more difficult. Expectations on the progress which students should make are mainly satisfactory, but sometimes suitably challenging work is not provided for more able students or those who have better knowledge and understanding because of their family background. Time is used fully, the limited resources put to good use, and students' books are marked. The department has decided not to set homework at present: this should be reviewed when resources have improved and curriculum time more appropriate in all year groups.
99. The subject is making a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development, and has potential to do more in this respect, but fortnightly lessons in Year 9 to 11 and no RE in Years 12 and 13 are the obvious constraint. Students are provided with opportunities to think and learn about values and beliefs, and to consider how they can influence attitudes and behaviour. They study the moral standards expected in the world religions and develop understanding of cultural diversity through learning about these religions.
100. Several factors are contributing to the improving position of RE at the college. They are the appointment of an RE specialist as head of department; an increased share of the humanities faculty's budget to remedy

the shortage of resources; more appropriate time in the curriculum in Years 7 and 8; and teaching by two teachers who can concentrate on this subject. Building upon the work done previously by the acting head of department, the position is improving, as shown by the quality of teaching and its impact on students' attitudes and progress. Much more still needs to be done, however. There is a breach of statutory requirements, as the Agreed Syllabus is not taught fully in Years 9 to 11, and not at all in Years 12 and 13; resources need to be improved; a scheme of assessment is needed; the scheme of work needs to be reviewed. The department has already included these points in its planned developments, including the introduction of accreditation by GCSE, and is beginning to tackle them. A firm basis is being laid for improvements in standards, but there is much lost ground to be made up.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

101. The Prospect Technology College was inspected in the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> November 1999, by a team of 14 inspectors, led by Mrs Sylvia Richardson. The registered inspector visited the college on three occasions before the inspection began, met with governors and staff and held a pre-inspection parents' meeting, attended by 30 parents. One hundred parents returned questionnaires to give their views of the college.
102. Prior to their arrival at the college, the team went through a large amount of documentation, including details of examination and test results, provided by the college. During the inspection, they saw 203 lessons, representing the full range of work in the college. These observations amounted to over 163 hours in total in classrooms. In addition, the inspectors interviewed a representative sample of 28 students who had provided the team with examples of their work, which were closely scrutinised as part of the inspection evidence. Inspectors also selected a large number of exercise books and folders to go through during the inspection to ensure that they gained a balanced view of students' work up-to-date. The college during the inspection provided further data, whenever the inspectors needed more information.
103. Inspectors interviewed the headteacher and senior managers, all heads of subject, a number of heads of year and representative governors. These included the Chair of governors and the chairs of committees including Finance and General Purposes and Curriculum. The governor with oversight of special educational needs and other governors made themselves available to talk to inspectors as needed.

## DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on college's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free college meals
Y7 – Y13	1212	30	313	175

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	70
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.3

#### Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked each week	717

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	75.1
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	26.4
	KS4	23



## Financial data

Financial year:

1998-1999
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	£
Total Income	2,846,728
Total Expenditure	2,822,753
Expenditure per pupil	2630.71
Balance brought forward from previous year	87,869
Balance carried forward to next year	111,844

**PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1212
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Number of questionnaires returned:

100
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**Responses (percentage of answers in each category):**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the college encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the college	26	65	7	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the college with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38	54	4	2	0
The college handles complaints from parents well	18	52	20	7	0
The college gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	16	64	11	8	0
The college keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	24	57	10	8	1
The college enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	28	62	4	2	2
The college encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	33	55	7	3	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	15	61	8	10	5
The college's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	27	60	11	0	0
The college achieves high standards of good behaviour	21	51	24	1	0
My child(ren) like(s) college	40	53	4	2	0