

INSPECTION REPORT

Sir Jonathan North Community College
Leicester

LEA area: Leicester City

Unique Reference Number: 120279

Headteacher: Mrs J Collins

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 6th – 10th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708190

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Knighton Lane East Leicester LE2 6FU
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Greenwood
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

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Ms C Hinds, Lay Inspector		The efficiency of the school Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Accommodation Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mr J Manning	English	
Mr G McGinn	History	Curriculum and assessment Staffing and learning resources
Ms D Norman-Dent	Mathematics	
Mr A Mathews	Special educational needs Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Ms D Sheffield	Equal opportunities Design and technology	
Mr J Sheffield	Art	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the college does well

- Strong leadership and a clear vision help the college to achieve its goals.
- Staff create a positive ethos in which students display good attitudes to work.
- Consistently effective teaching enables students to make good progress and achieve well.
- Very good relationships in the college help to create conditions in which students are able to learn successfully.
- Procedures for assessing students' work are good, providing a strong basis for curriculum planning.
- Very good financial planning helps the college to meet its priorities for development efficiently and effectively.
- The mutual trust and respect between staff and students fosters an atmosphere which encourages good personal development of students.
- Very good information to parents helps them to become actively involved in supporting their daughters' work.
- Progress of students with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 4 and very good at Key Stage 3 as a result of both teachers and support staff responding well to their needs.
- Procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are well developed through an effective pastoral system.
- The college has successfully put in place a wide range of measures which have brought about an overall improvement in attendance levels this year.
- Very effective arrangements for the professional development of staff have contributed to improving the overall quality of teaching and provision.
- Throughout the curriculum and other activities, good contributions are made to students' social and moral development.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities helps students become involved in activities beyond daily lessons.

• Where the college has weaknesses

- I. Some aspects of curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 limit students' entitlement in several subjects but especially in information technology.
- II. The College does not provide for students to have a daily act of collective worship.
- III. Arrangements for students' spiritual development, both through assemblies and in subjects across the curriculum, are unsatisfactory.
- IV. Aspects of provision for mathematics are inadequate so that not all students achieve as well in this subject as they do in others in the college.

Sir Jonathan North Community College has many more strengths than weaknesses and offers its students a good quality education. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students at the college.

• How the school has improved since the last inspection

The college has made good progress in maintaining and developing the high quality of education provided. Standards in public examinations have improved, with results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 being the best ever achieved by students in the college. Teaching has improved in quality since the

previous inspection. The accommodation has been significantly extended and plans are at an advanced stage for further extension in response to the predicted rise in student numbers in the near future. Arrangements for the teaching of humanities subjects have been improved. Considerable work has been done to improve provision for information technology and plans now in place should, when implemented, secure further improvement. However, the college does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for information technology. The college has not put in place provision for a daily act of collective worship. The college's capacity for further improvement is good.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			ey
			<i>Well above average</i> A
			<i>Above average</i> B
Key Stage 3 Tests	B	A	<i>Average</i> C
GCSE Examinations	B	A	<i>Below average</i> D
			<i>Well below average</i> E

At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of students reaching Level 5 or above is above the national average in English and science and is in line with the national average for mathematics. When compared with schools for students from similar backgrounds, results are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics.

The 1999 GCSE results were the best ever achieved by students at the college and represent a significant improvement on results in the previous two years. Results in many subjects were above the national average when compared with all schools and well above averages for similar schools. Results were particularly good in art, English and religious education but were below average in some aspects of design and technology and in music, mathematics, geography and history.

The attainment of students on entry in recent years has been just below the national average, though the overall reading ages of students entering the college in recent years has been declining. In 1999, almost two thirds of students in Year 7 had reading ages on entry below 11 years.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, science, art, history, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and dance.	Mathematics, design and technology.

Years 10-11	Good	English, science, art, history, geography, dance and music.	Design and technology.
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is a strength of the college. Throughout the college, teaching is satisfactory or better in around nineteen lessons out of twenty. It is good or better in two thirds and is very good or excellent in a quarter of all lessons. The majority of the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Key Stage 3.

Teaching is a particular strength in art, English, geography, history, music, physical education, religious education, dance and science. Only in design and technology and mathematics is there a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

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

• **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. Most students behave well in lessons and around the school. Students move around the building in an orderly manner. The challenging behaviour of a very small minority is well managed by staff in the college.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance has improved slightly in this academic year. A very small number of students are persistently absent. Students arrive at college, and to lessons, punctually.
Ethos*	Good. The college has a commitment to high standards, to student independence and to participation of all. The vast majority of students adopt positive attitudes to work. Relationships in the college are very good, contributing to a positive atmosphere which encourages learning.
Leadership and management	Good overall. Very good leadership sets a clear vision for the college and helps to foster a positive ethos. Planning is good, enabling the aims and values of the college to be realised. Efficient and effective administration and good financial control help the college run smoothly.
Curriculum	Satisfactory overall, but with some significant weaknesses in Key Stage 4 relating to provision for information technology and to the organisation of subjects and teaching groups, which limits students' entitlement.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good provision overall, enabling students with special educational needs to make good progress at Key Stage 4 and very good progress at Key Stage 3.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Very good provision for students' social development and good provision for moral development. The contribution which the college makes to students' cultural development is satisfactory overall but that to spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum is good overall.

Arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good.

Value for money

The college offers good value for money.

**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 school

- V. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the college.
- VI. College staff are approachable when problems occur and complaints are handled well.
- VII. Parents are well informed about what is taught and about the progress their daughters are making.
- VIII. Students are enabled to achieve a good standard of work.
- IX. Students are encouraged to participate in more than the daily lessons.
- X. There are good arrangements for homework.
- XI. Behaviour of students in the college is good.
- XII. Students like the college.

What some parents are not happy about

- XIII. Some higher attaining students are not identified.
- XIV. Reports lack consistency and the
- XV. The quality of the personal and social
- XVI. The marking of some homework gives

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. The overall attainment of students in the college is improving, as are recent examination results, indicating that students are being helped to achieve good standards of work. Students report that they like coming to the college and most of them behave well. There are many ways in which parents are kept informed about what is taught, including a range of booklets and regular curriculum presentations, and parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the college. Arrangements for responding to parents' questions and concerns are very effective. The range of activities which students can take part in beyond normal lessons is extensive. Students are provided with appropriate work to do at home and this is carefully monitored. Parents' concerns about variability in the quality of personal and social education lessons are partly justified and there is some inconsistency in reports to parents. Concerns about higher attaining students not being appropriately challenged and about the homework of students not being valued were not supported by evidence during the inspection.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to raise levels of attainment of students in the college, attention should be given to the following issues:

1. Improve curriculum provision at Key Stage 4, by:
 - XVII. reviewing the option arrangements to ensure that all students have greater flexibility in subject selection (*paragraphs 42, 43*);
 - XVIII. reviewing timetabling arrangements for grouping students to allow them to be allocated to more appropriate sets in mathematics, French, physical education and design and technology so that they make better progress in all these subjects (*paragraphs 43, 44*);
 - XIX. providing broader provision for information technology and design and technology in order to meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum (*paragraphs 43, 87, 152*);
 - XX. reviewing the arrangements and time allocations for teaching general studies, personal and social education and religious education (*paragraph 43*).

2. Improve provision for information technology throughout the college, by:
 - XXI. increasing access for all students to the full range of experiences set out in the National Curriculum Orders for information technology (*paragraphs 41, 43, 87, 189, 202*);
 - XXII. urgently implementing the existing plans for the teaching of information technology (*paragraphs 35, 183 - 193*);
 - XXIII. reviewing what other subjects are currently doing to support the development and application of information technology skills across the curriculum and ensuring that all subjects are meeting the requirements within their National Curriculum Orders (*paragraphs 16, 43, 127, 202, 206*).

3. Ensure that, through assemblies and subject teaching, better contributions are made to students' spiritual development, by:
 - XXIV. developing a clearer structure for assembly themes, so that they offer opportunities for spiritual development and ensuring that sufficient time is allocated to assemblies to enable leaders to provide students with the opportunity for a time for reflection (*paragraph 58*);
 - XXV. reviewing where each subject could contribute in a planned way to the spiritual development of students and implementing these plans (*paragraph 58*).

4. Make arrangements for all students to be able to participate in a daily act of collective worship (*paragraph 87*).

In addition, the college should address the following issues in their action plan:

- XXVI. Improve levels of attainment and students' confidence in mathematics, by:
 - XXVII. Developing more rigour in ensuring students have understood the work they have been taught (*paragraphs 121, 122*,

124);

XXVIII. Ensuring that students know, specifically, what they need to do to improve their mathematics (*paragraphs 126, 127*);

XXIX. Implementing, as a matter of urgency, the college's action plan for developing students' numeracy skills across the curriculum (*paragraph 15*).

XXX. Improve provision for students' cultural development, particularly by ensuring that, throughout the curriculum, the experiences provided by the diverse cultures represented within the school are fully shared (*paragraphs 61*).

XXXI. Make consistently better use of a range of data available about students' performances to help set clear individual targets (*paragraphs 56, 64, 126, 127, 150, 173,200*).

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INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1 Sir Jonathan North Community College is a girls' comprehensive college for students aged 11 to 16, situated in an urban environment about two miles south of the centre of the City of Leicester. Around half of the girls attending the college come from an area relatively close to the school, with the remainder coming from other parts of Leicester. Students transfer to the college from over 30 primary schools.

2 The college has 1078 girls on roll, making it above average in size when compared with comprehensive schools nationally. Around thirty per cent of the girls come from minority ethnic backgrounds and about a quarter come from homes where English is not the first language. This number is high when compared nationally. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at around eighteen per cent, is close to the national average.

3 The attainment of students on entry to the college in the recent past has been just below average overall, with fewer than average numbers of the highest attaining students. The pattern of reading ages of students entering the college over the past five years has shown a steady decline and, in 1999, over sixty per cent of students entering the college had a reading age below their chronological age. Currently there are 30 students with statements of special educational need and a further 158 are on the special educational needs register. These figures are close to national averages.

4 The college's aims are to provide students with a breadth of knowledge, experience and skills, to ensure that they achieve the highest possible standards, to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness, to encourage students to respect and support others and to enable them to take responsibility for their learning. In order to do this the college is committed to having high expectations, praising and rewarding effort, celebrating diversity and promoting equal opportunities. It aims to offer a broad curriculum, meet the needs of all students, provide high quality teaching, foster partnerships between students, parents and staff and create an attractive learning environment.

5 The college has set clear targets for the coming two years, based on information about students' prior performance. Targets are that the proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2000 will be 50 per cent, the proportion of students gaining 1 or more A* to G grade will be 95 per cent and the average points score will be 38.

• **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	207	207

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	142	109	119
	Total	142	109	119
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	69(81)	53(62)	58(66)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	40(52)	29(33)	25(37)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	149	121	135
	Total	149	121	135
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72(64)	58(58)	65(60)
	National	64(62)	64(63)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	43(39)	31(27)	34(36)
	National	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

Attainment at Key Stage 4¹

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	201	201

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 pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	109	190	197
	Total	109	190	197
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	54.2(44.3)	94.5(90.0)	98.0(93.7)
	National	46(44)	91(90)	96(95)

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Percentages 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	School	6.7
	Absence	National comparative data	8.2
	Unauthorised	School	2.1
	Absence	National comparative data	1.2

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Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	58
	Permanent	2

- ## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	25
	Satisfactory or better	95
	Less than satisfactory	5

- **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**
- **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**
- **Attainment and progress**

6 In recent years the attainment of students entering the college has been just below the national average. The Key Stage 2 results for students entering the college in 1999 were close to, but just below, national averages. Over recent years, there has been a steady decline in the overall reading ages of students entering the college, with almost two thirds of students entering in 1999 with reading ages below eleven years and about a quarter with reading ages below nine years.

7 By the end of Key Stage 3, students attain overall standards which are above the national average and well above average when compared with schools for students from similar backgrounds. The proportion of students reaching Level 5 or above is above the national average in English and science and is in line with the national average for mathematics. In English, the proportion reaching Level 6 or above is above the national average, whilst in science the proportion is in line with the national average and in mathematics it is below. When compared with the results in schools for students from similar backgrounds, results are well above average in English and science and in line with the average in mathematics. Attainment in end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 showed a slight fall compared with 1998, but this was anticipated by the college on the basis of attainment of this group of students on entry to the college. This drop came after three years of steady improvement in Key Stage 3 results.

8 In design and technology, information technology, modern languages, music and physical education, Key Stage 3 students are achieving standards which are broadly in line with national expectations. Attainment in art and dance is above national expectations, whilst in history it is just below national expectations, having improved in 1999 compared with the previous year. Standards have declined in geography in recent years and standards are now below national expectations at the end of the Key Stage. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with those outlined in the local Agreed Syllabus. The attainment of students currently in Key Stage 3 indicates a higher standard than has been achieved by students in recent years.

9 At the end of Key Stage 4, students achieve results which are above the national average. In 1999, GCSE results were the best ever achieved by the college and represent a significant improvement on results in the previous two years. The proportion of students gaining five or more higher (A* to C) grades was above the national average, as was the number gaining five or more A* to G grades and the average points score of each student. When compared with schools for students from similar backgrounds, the proportions were well above average for all three of these measures.

10 In the core subjects, results were well above average in English, above average in science and in line with the average for mathematics. Results were above national averages in art and broadly in line with national averages in design and technology, modern languages and physical education. In music, results were below average, though performance was a strength, and results were below national averages in history and geography. Results have improved in geography but there has been no improvement in GCSE history results since the previous inspection. In drama, results have improved from below the national average three years ago to above average in 1999.

11 The college undertakes an analysis of overall results for different ethnic groups. This reveals

that Asian girls perform slightly better than other students for higher grade passes in GCSE examinations and Afro-Caribbean students perform relatively worse. The college has begun to address under-achievement of specific groups of students through the 'Future Pathways' programme and the Afro-Caribbean mentoring scheme, but insufficient attention is paid in all departments to ensuring that the needs of all student groups are addressed.

12 At both key stages, attainment is higher than at the time of the previous inspection. This reflects improvements in teaching. In particular, teachers are paying more attention to setting high expectations in lessons and are making the learning objectives of each lesson clear to students. Attainment in information technology, highlighted as low in the previous inspection, has improved, but provision remains inadequate and hence standards for most students are not as high as they should be.

13 The literacy skills of the students improve greatly during their time in the college. Many students enter with a reading age below their chronological age; in the last two years nearly a quarter of the students were over two years below when they arrived. Through implementation of a determined and well-planned whole-school policy, students gain confidence in reading and writing and make good progress. Throughout the college, key words are prominently displayed. Teachers of all subjects add to the work put in by English and special educational needs staff by reinforcing literacy skills in many lessons. They provide subject glossaries in geography and use role-play in science, history and geography to stimulate interest and to help students understand difficult concepts.

14 In information technology, students show that they can read a range of new words in CD-Roms and by following screen commands. They effectively plan and draft work at home as well as learning to write quite perceptive evaluations of projects. Students display good speaking and listening skills in history. They show a good knowledge of historical characters during classroom debate. In geography, students are often fluent readers. They can research background information from daily newspapers when writing about the cause and effect of earthquakes. In art students respond well to the opportunities to use information technology to do research on topics about famous artists. They are helped by the prominent display of technical vocabulary in design and technology and this helps them to structure reasonably good essays.

15 The majority of students have numeracy skills which are sufficient to cope in most subjects. Students can calculate and measure competently in design and technology, although they do not all feel confident as they work. Students make sense of information presented graphically in subjects such as science, geography and history. In physics, higher attaining students in Year 11 handle the algebraic requirements well. The college has plans in place to improve numeracy skills in a variety of ways through professional development of staff and the development of student activities such as competitions and displays.

16 The application of information technology to support learning in other subjects is under-developed, as is the contribution made in those subjects to the development of information technology skills. Hence many students who do not follow a full information technology course in Key Stage 4 have standards in information technology which are relatively low.

17 Since the time of the previous inspection, overall attainment in Key Stage 3 has shown a slight improvement and the attainment of students currently in Years 7 to 9 suggests a continuation of this trend. Good progress has been made in improving attainment in Key Stage 4, especially over the past three years. The main factor in improving attainment has been improvement in overall teaching quality. The very good progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4 of students with special educational needs is underpinned by a variety of learning support provision; in class support, small group and individual student programmes and a focus on developing reading and literacy skills. The literacy programme makes a significant contribution towards raising attainment for students in Years 7

and 8. Very good progress in reading is made by students who enter the college with low reading ages.

18 In lessons, students make good progress in most subjects. This is true in English and science, while progress in mathematics at this key stage is variable. Some is very good but, in a quarter of lessons, progress in mathematics is unsatisfactory. Progress is very good in dance, is good in most lessons in history, geography, art, music, drama and physical education and is satisfactory overall in religious education, modern foreign languages and information technology lessons. Progress in design and technology lessons in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory in about a third of lessons, mainly because students are required to concentrate too much on some basic skills while others are ignored.

19 At Key Stage 4, overall progress is good or better in all subjects. It is very good in almost two thirds of English lessons and good in almost all others. Students make good progress at this stage in mathematics lessons, as they do in science. Progress in design and technology is better than at Key Stage 3 and it is good, overall, in information technology lessons. Across the curriculum, however, students' progress in developing and applying information technology skills in most other subjects is unsatisfactory. Students make good progress in many history, geography, religious education, art and some physical education lessons, while progress in modern foreign languages and music lessons is satisfactory. Progress in dance and drama lessons is very good.

20 The college has met its targets for 1999 and has set high targets for future improvement, based on known information about students' prior attainment. Teachers and students are working closely together to develop these targets and good levels of progress are being made toward achieving them.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

21 Students' attitudes to work are good. A distinct feature is the composure of the girls as they settle to their lessons. They are quiet and purposeful and have the appropriate materials to hand. Students almost always listen well to the teachers and are generally able and willing to answer questions. In the best of lessons, they are excited and enthusiastic. In an English lesson looking at a soliloquy from Macbeth, for example, Year 10 girls were bubbly, vivacious, articulate and thoughtful as they readily exchanged ideas and opinions. The studious approach evident at the beginning of a Year 7 history lesson about the Roman gods quickly developed into a positive buzz of conversation about the gods and Roman religion. Students take part willingly and ably in question and answer sessions and will even ask their own questions, as instanced by a Year 11 mathematics lesson where the teacher was being asked searching questions about cumulative frequency. The attitudes of students who have special educational needs are equally positive. For instance, girls were all joining in a question and answer session during a Year 7 literacy lesson.

22 Sustained concentration is a feature of many lessons. Students demonstrate a genuine interest in their work. They often remain focused throughout the entire lesson. An excellent example was observed during monologue performances by Year 11 drama students. Here, the girls were utterly focused in listening to the very original ideas demonstrated during one another's performances. An additional feature of this lesson was that the very high quality of work produced demonstrated good understanding of moral issues.

23 Students are capable of independent study, as instanced by a Year 8 history group, where girls were using both the college and local library to research the life of Queen Elizabeth I. The girls are generally proud of their efforts and take care in presentation. Year 7 Science students wrote up their work on diffusion with great care and very quickly.

24 The girls' commitment to the 'Study Buddies' scheme is an example of the positive attitudes

students have. Most of the thirty participating Year 10 girls, and the Year 7 girls who are being supported with their reading, make distinct efforts to get to college early on two mornings each week. The girls who are following the Future Pathways curriculum show genuine enthusiasm for their work despite the desire by some to appear uninterested. On the very rare occasions where the attitudes of some of the students are unsatisfactory, this is directly related to unsatisfactory teaching.

25 As at the time of the previous inspection, students' behaviour is good. Girls respond well and, at times, very well to the very high expectations of almost all the teachers. Students are motivated to behave well by the extremely good use of the rewards and sanctions systems. The college has recently adopted a positive behaviour management system which is proving successful. Almost all the students have extremely positive attitudes to the use of rewards and welcome the new arrangements for behaviour management. In many lessons, across a range of subjects, students' behaviour is exceptionally good. Students are polite and friendly. They show great respect for the college buildings and they are proud of their environment. Classrooms are almost always characterised by calm and purposeful activity. Despite moments of congestion at stairwells and through some doors, most students move around the college in a calm and orderly manner. Bullying is rare and, when it does occur, students are rightly confident that it will be well handled. A very small minority of students find conforming to the college's expectations difficult. The unsatisfactory behaviour of these few students rarely affects progress of others and very seldom upsets the genuinely harmonious atmosphere of the college.

26 This harmony is partly due to the very good relationships which exist throughout the entire college. Relationships between students and between students and staff are very good and a distinct strength of the college. These have improved since the previous inspection. The college is a very friendly place in which to work and play. Girls work very well together in lessons; particularly positive relationships were evident in many science lessons where students collaborated well in their various experiments. Students in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, for example, worked very well in pairs alternating the use of the terminals when doing computer work on angles. The ability to listen to the views of others in an attentive and considered way is a feature of many lessons, as instanced by their absorption in one another's presentations of loneliness in a Year 11 drama lesson.

27 High levels of mutual trust and respect are evident not just between the girls, but also between girls and staff. The concerns of a few parents about a minority of staff showing lack of respect for students are unjustified. Even those girls whose behaviour is challenging do recognise authority. Staff devote a significant amount of time and energy to helping these challenging students understand that they are valued members of the college community. Students are very supportive of one another in activities beyond the classroom. They contribute freely to good causes, as when all tutor groups contributed positively to the collection of food for hampers for Age Concern which Year 9 students organise. All students, whether directly involved or not, know about, and support, the activities of the Student Council.

28 The personal development of the students is good. Girls have mature and responsible attitudes to their own learning. Students with special educational needs are encouraged within a positive ethos which fosters self-esteem. All students make good use of the opportunities they are given to participate in their lessons. In physical education, for example, they enjoy the opportunities they are given to umpire matches and to comment on their own performance and that of others. Since the last inspection, many faculties have made good progress in extending the range of situations where students can take responsibility for their own learning.

29 Students respond particularly well to the formal provision of opportunities to take responsibility for others, as instanced by the involvement of many in the 'Starting Buddies' scheme. This scheme involves all Year 10 girls as mentors for Year 7 students starting at the college and helps girls

appreciate the range of concerns of younger students. Girls who are involved in the many extra curricular activities, such as the Student Amnesty International Group or productions such as 'Fiddler on the Roof', participate with high levels of interest, enthusiasm and commitment.

- **Attendance**

30 Attendance at the college is satisfactory. The vast majority of students attend well and many very well. Around a third of students have a record of full attendance for the school year to date. Attendance figures overall are adversely affected by the poor attendance records of a very small number of students. A small number of parents continue to remove students during term time for extended family holidays. Despite these difficulties the college has managed to improve attendance levels by around one per cent on the figures for the previous academic year. Punctuality is good and students arrive promptly to lessons.

- **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

- **Teaching**

31 The overall quality of teaching is better than at the time of the previous inspection and is now a strength of the college. Teaching is satisfactory or better in ninety five per cent of lessons, compared with ninety per cent previously. The proportion of teaching which is good or better has also improved and now two thirds of lessons fall into this category. A quarter of all teaching in the college is very good or excellent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in one lesson in twenty. There is very little variation in teaching quality between the two key stages, though the majority of the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Key Stage 3.

32 The improvement in teaching has largely been brought about by better planning, by the use of a wider range of teaching styles and by making sure that students know the objectives for lessons. In the best lessons, these objectives are used to review learning with students at the end in order to set further objectives for subsequent lessons. Teachers have improved their day to day assessment of students' work and this has led to improvements in the quality of their planning.

33 Teaching is a strength throughout the college in English, science, geography, history, religious education and art, while it is a strength at Key Stage 3 in modern foreign languages, physical education and dance. At Key Stage 4, teaching is a strength in music. There are some significant weaknesses in teaching in mathematics in Key Stage 3 and in design and technology throughout the college, though in both these subjects this unsatisfactory teaching is offset by some good teaching, especially at Key Stage 4. The teaching of the personal and social education course is variable, leading to significant variation in the impact which this course makes on different groups of students.

34 Teachers throughout the college have good subject knowledge and are aware of the best ways in which to present their subject to the students. This is particularly a strength in English, in science and in Key Stage 4 physical education lessons. The planning of lessons is good in almost all subjects. Adventurous planning in science leads to exciting lessons and, in the better lessons in design and technology, planning is carefully focused on providing a range of activities, especially at Key Stage 4. In history and geography, good planning is based on the identification of clear objectives which are shared with the students. In many physical education lessons, clear objectives in planning help teachers and students evaluate the outcomes well.

35 As at the time of the previous inspection, teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve in most subjects. Students are challenged well in English, while in many mathematics lessons teachers have high expectations of student attention and effort. High expectations are a feature of many geography lessons, linked to developing and understanding of challenging issues. In religious education, there is a high level of expectation of student participation and this leads to improved attainment of those students who accept the challenge. Only in some information technology lessons is the level of expectation of what students can achieve too low, with the result that some students do not make sufficient progress.

36 A strength of teaching previously was that teachers used an appropriately wide range of styles. This has been maintained and developed in most subjects. Teachers' questioning of students has improved and is now very good in a range of subjects including English and drama. The range of activities has been improved in history, where teaching was criticised in the previous inspection. In almost all lessons, teachers are firm but friendly and manage students well.

37 Teachers generally make good use of time, ensuring that all the time in lessons is productive. Careful planning is crucial to this success, as is the developing practice of using the latter parts of lessons to review learning with students. Resources available to teachers, both in terms of books and equipment, are generally used well. Insufficient use is made of computers in many subjects because there are currently insufficient machines available.

38 Generally teachers mark students' work regularly and there is evidence of better use being made of day to day assessment to guide teachers' planning. This is linked to the identification of clearer objectives for lessons. The marking of students' work is thorough and teachers provide encouraging comments but most are not yet linking marking to learning objectives and are not, therefore, giving sufficient guidance to students on what they need to do, specifically, to improve. Homework is set regularly by most teachers and the tasks set relate well to work in lessons.

39 The teaching of the small groups of students with special educational needs is almost always at least satisfactory and often good. Lessons are well prepared, conducted at a brisk pace with good changes in activities well matched to students' needs and supporting progress. Discipline is firm, within a supportive and positive ethos, with frequent encouragement and praise for students' hard work or achievements. There are some good examples of collaborative teaching between learning support teachers and subject specialists in modern foreign languages, English, religious education, history and geography, where the learning support teachers, and classrooms assistants, contribute positively to the progress made by students in those lessons.

40 The quality of information provided for subject teachers about the specific learning needs of students with special educational needs is very good. The individual learning plans describe the student's attainment, specific learning difficulties and give general targets for the student's learning and progress in the term ahead. Subject teachers then effectively interpret this plan into specific targets for the individual's work in their subject.

The curriculum and assessment

41 The curriculum at Key Stage 3 makes good provision for breadth and balance and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. The time allocation to subjects is broadly in line with recommendations, with time for English appropriately weighted in order to develop literacy skills. The time allocation for French in Year 7 is low. All students study French in Year 7, after which nearly a third of students take up German in Years 8 and 9. The school has made some positive efforts to address the criticism in the previous inspection report

by introducing information technology lessons in Years 7 and 8. However, the National Curriculum requirement for the development and application of information technology skills through other subjects is not being fully met. Timetabling arrangements in humanities have been improved since the previous inspection and this has contributed to higher standards in these subjects at Key Stage 3.

42 The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not provide satisfactory breadth and balance for all students. Some positive efforts have been made to address the criticisms of the curriculum made at the time of the previous inspection. The allocation of time to physical education has been increased. The recent introduction of the Future Pathways course, accredited by ASDAN Youth Award, and courses leading to the Certificate of Achievement in subjects such as English, mathematics and modern foreign languages, provide an effective alternative curriculum more suited to those students for whom a full GCSE programme is inappropriate.

43 At Key Stage 4, there is a basic curriculum of English language and literature, mathematics, double science, a modern foreign language, physical education, general studies, personal and social education and either a design and technology course, from one of four options, or information technology. In addition, students study two additional examination courses, one in a humanities subject and one in an aspect of expressive arts. The criticism made in the previous inspection of the inadequate provision for information technology has not been fully addressed. Those students who do not take a GCSE information technology course receive only five periods of the subject in each of Years 10 and 11, through the general studies programme, supplemented with some provision in other subjects across the curriculum. This remains inadequate. Those students who choose to study the full course of information technology are not able to receive their statutory entitlement to a minimum of a short course in design and technology. The time allocation to religious education is barely sufficient to meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. There is the potential for some overlap in the general studies and personal and social education courses and the two courses take a disproportionate amount of the overall time available. Currently there are no vocational courses at Key Stage 4, though the college is considering the introduction of a GNVQ course in leisure and tourism.

44 Overall, the curriculum provides satisfactory equality of access and opportunity for students to learn and make progress, though provision is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. The college aims and departmental policies clearly recognise the importance of equal opportunities in learning. There is now a good match of teaching styles and materials to the different needs of pupils. Overall, equality of access at Key Stage 3 is good, especially through the mixed ability teaching in Year 7 and the carefully managed banding arrangements in Years 8 and 9. An effective literacy policy and the tracking of students' progress are also providing opportunities and strategies to enable all students to learn appropriately. At Key Stage 4, the current options scheme does not allow pupils to choose more than one modern foreign language, one humanities subject or one expressive arts subject. Also, the arrangements for timetabling mathematics, French, physical education and design and technology mean that students are not necessarily appropriately grouped and this restricts their learning in some of these subjects. The arrangement where students choose either information technology or a design and technology subject fails to meet requirements and thus impedes students' progress in these areas.

45 Provision for students with special educational needs continues to be as good throughout the college, as previously reported. The Learning Support department has clear aims, policies and arrangements, with close liaison with subject areas and effective arrangements for in-class support. It is particularly good in English, art, history, physical education and design and technology. The curriculum meets the recommendations of the special educational needs Code of Practice and is accessible to all students on the special needs register. The college responds well to the assessment data collected when students arrive at the college with a well focused and successful literacy programme mainly focused on students whose reading ages are significantly below their actual ages. The college has been granted a basic skills quality mark in recognition of its work with lower attaining students.

46 The planning of courses provides satisfactory continuity and progression in students' learning as they move through the college. Curriculum links with the main partner primary schools are enhanced by regular dialogue and by visits by the Head of Year 7 and the special educational needs coordinator, coupled with induction days. The college's curriculum documentation is clear and detailed and its assessment data is very good in informing departments about students' progress and attainment at the beginning of both key stages. This enables teachers to plan lessons within a long-term framework, thereby achieving continuity and progression. There are particularly good practices in English, art, humanities subjects, science, physical education and religious education. Planning is less good at Key Stage 4 in information technology, where information from the previous key stage is inadequately used, and in mathematics, where grouping arrangements constrain progression. Careers advice on post-16 opportunities is good and prepares students well for the next stage in their education.

47 The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities that extend the educational opportunities for the students. This is consistent with the situation at the time of the previous inspection and is a continuing strength of the college. Theatre and gallery trips are organised through the English and expressive arts faculties. Students on the 'Future Pathways' course have a residential weekend and close liaison with the Peugeot motor company. Design and technology students link with the Leicester Mercury to produce recycled materials in their 'Fantastic in Plastic' project and have an enterprise week in Year 9. Students are also actively involved in charity work. There is an annual programme of expressive arts productions, exhibitions and concerts which provides opportunities for students to express their talents. In sport, there are good opportunities at lunchtime for both inter-tutor group activities and mixed year group competitions, with a good response from some 200 students. They are well supported by a large number of staff as spectators and well organised by the Sports Development Team, consisting of staff and students.

48 As at the time of the previous inspection, careers education and guidance is good. There is a coherent careers programme, beginning in Year 7, which has been well coordinated by an enthusiastic head of careers. It is taught effectively through the personal and social education programme by form tutors. Students in Year 9 receive advice while making their option choices and all Year 10 pupils do work experience with effective preparation using many tutors from industry and with good follow up. Through the close links with the Leicestershire Careers Service, interviews are offered to students in Year 11 and representatives from local colleges come into the college to inform students of post-16 opportunities. Pupils have ready access to up-to-date information in an attractively arranged, though small, careers section of the library.

49 There is good provision for health, sex and drugs education through the personal and social education programme. It is coherently planned and coordinated by a senior member of staff. Aspects of sex education are also appropriately considered through work in science and religious education.

50 Procedures for the assessment of students' work are good and significant progress has been made since the last inspection. Clear and thorough whole-college policies now exist on marking, reporting and recording. Departments generally reflect these in their own policies and nearly all have developed improved strategies for assessing, monitoring and recording students' progress.

51 A well organised and coherent assessment policy and structure are now in place. Students are assessed early in Year 7 to provide information on their reading age, mathematics competency and cognitive abilities. These, along with the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum statutory assessments, are then passed to faculties to inform their planning and to parents to inform them of their daughters' attainment level and needs. The arrangements for evaluating the difficulties of students with special educational needs and for assessing their attainments are good. A well planned assessment calendar has been devised to track reassessment points from Year 7 to Year 11 and to link them with the regular

progress checks through form tutors so that the students' progress can be carefully monitored and recorded.

52 All departments now have assessment policies in place which are mostly of good quality. Implementation is also generally good, especially in English, science, history, physical education and expressive arts. However, matching teacher assessments to National Curriculum criteria at the end of Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory in design and technology. Assessment of information technology skills has also been constrained by the lack of involvement of other subject areas, though the situation is being addressed.

53 Marking has much improved and is now at least satisfactory in all subjects. A clear college policy emphasises the need for constructive comments which explain the strengths and weaknesses in the work and then give helpful targets and advice for improvement. These guidelines are reflected in the very good marking in English and science, where it is consistently thorough, and the good quality in art, design and technology, religious education and in history, especially at Key Stage 3. Though there is no whole-college grading system, most departments have adopted a common grading system for effort and attainment. There is no confusion in the minds of the students.

54 Recording of assessment information has also improved. Thorough procedures exist for the implementation of the annual progress check as a means of recording students' progress through the college. Detailed records of attainment are kept by faculty and year heads which are transferred regularly to students' files. Most faculties now hold portfolios of students' work as exemplars of National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 3 to provide accurate standardisation of attainment. These are particularly well organised in English, science, physical education, expressive arts, geography and history.

55 A whole-college reporting policy has also been effectively developed since the last inspection. Clear guidelines on annual report-writing set a common grading system related to National Curriculum levels and emphasise the need to have subject-specific comments. The quality of the report writing by a small minority of departments in response to this has been variable, and supports the concern expressed by some parents. For example, mathematics reports do not always have sufficient reference to the subject specific skills required. However, the situation is better than at the time of the last inspection. Group tutors help students to write personal statements to preface the report and to negotiate targets. Year 11 students are helped in producing their statement for the Record of Achievement by visiting tutors such as governors, employers, and personnel from a local further education college. Reporting times are scheduled at suitable intervals and are followed by parents' evenings.

56 The use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning is more variable. The school makes good use of information from standardised tests and the results of National Curriculum statutory assessments to organise students into class groupings based on attainment at both key stages. This information is made readily available to faculties at the beginning of each key stage for planning, target-setting and monitoring. Some faculties such as English, science and modern foreign languages (at Key Stage 4) use the information well to plan groups and work. Its use in other subjects is less well developed. In information technology, assessment outcomes at Key Stage 3 are recorded, but are not yet used for effective planning at the next key stage. Assessment outcomes are also not so effectively used for planning in mathematics, design and technology and humanities subjects. Whole school arrangements for individual targeting of students still require further development to ensure that the good practice in some subjects, such as English and science, is shared more widely.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

57 As at the time of the last inspection, the college continues to have aims which promote the personal and social development of students, celebrate diversity and promote equal opportunities and partnership between students, staff and parents. These aims it largely fulfils, with the social development of students continuing to be very good and well supported by a range of initiatives, both at whole college level and within the curriculum. Cultural development is fostered satisfactorily in a college which is noticeable for its high degree of racial harmony and its natural approach to living together as a multicultural community. The contribution made by the college to students' moral development is good.

58 Spiritual development overall is unsatisfactory. Provision for religious education has been completely reviewed since the time of the last inspection and now makes a better contribution to students' knowledge and insight into values and beliefs, and to their spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. Other references are made to values and beliefs in the curriculum, notably in design and technology, geography, history and art. Spiritual awareness is supported by work in drama, in geography and in art as well as in the response to some activities in science but, overall, spiritual development is underdeveloped in the curriculum. Assemblies contain moral themes and some collective music making but, overall, fail to make a strong contribution to students' spiritual development.

59 The contribution which the college makes to students' moral development is good. It is supported by a strong behaviour code for students which is consistently implemented by staff. There is a regular focus on strategies to combat bullying, both in assemblies and in personal and social education lessons. Staff act as good role models of interpersonal behaviour. Ethical issues are specifically addressed in the general studies course in Key Stage 4 as well as being covered elsewhere in the curriculum. A role play exercise on the Carajas Project in geography deals powerfully with the impact of mining on the rain forest. Moral issues related to slavery and the origins and development of the world wars are explored in history.

60 Opportunities for the social development of students are very good. Many opportunities exist for students to develop their ability to relate positively to others and to take responsibility. Whole college initiatives include the annual project to fill hampers for Age Concern, organised by students in year 9 for the whole college, Study Buddies, Starting Buddies and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Social development is further supported through the use of group and pair work, discussions and role play in many subjects. Further examples include coaching and umpiring practice in games, opportunities for independent learning and enterprise activities in physical education, design and technology and in the Future Pathways course. There are many examples of positive relationships, sharing, consideration for others, and self-discipline, for example by students acting in support roles such as librarians. Many links exist with the local community, resulting in visits out of college and visitors to the college such as sports coaches and the visiting authors during book week. This is further supported by the community education role of the college.

61 The contribution made by the college to students' cultural development is satisfactory overall, though with some strengths and some weaknesses. The study of British history and of Christianity in religious education helps students understand the culture of their own society. Visits to theatres and residential visits, along with college drama, art and music events also make a strong contribution to cultural awareness. Students are helped to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures through work done in a range of subjects. Examples include work on world cuisine in food technology, the study of other places and peoples in geography, writing about cultures from the perspective of those belonging to them in English and monologues written and performed on arranged marriage in drama. Students also benefit from the study of world religions and their beliefs and practices, including relative understandings of issues such as vegetarianism, capital punishment and marriage in religious education. However, many opportunities are missed for developing a greater awareness of other cultures, and particularly of the cultures represented in the college community. Examples include the cultural strand in modern languages, the study of the Islamic world in history and in links that could be made between

tessellation and Arabic culture in mathematics. The college lacks a sufficiently proactive and co-ordinated approach to multi-cultural education across the curriculum and beyond to enable students' cultural development to be further enriched.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

62 The educational and personal support provided for students is a significant strength of the college and is of very good quality. Provision has improved since the previous inspection. Pastoral provision is very well led by a caring senior management team. Heads of year provide very good support for their staff and students. Teachers know their students very well and regularly commit significant time to their individual needs. Relationships between staff and students are very good as instanced by the willing apologies from students who occasionally misbehave. Information flows efficiently and effectively between form tutors, year heads and faculties. These clear lines of communication are not only due to the existence of established systems such as weekly briefings and bulletins, programmes of team meetings, calendars of activities, progress checks and regular discussions but are also the result of all staff working very well together.

63 The personal and social education programme is well organised and effective, though a lack of consistency in the quality of the teaching of this course prevents all students maximising the benefits the programme offers. Of particular value in helping Year 11 students prepare for life after college is the transition programme where a wide range of local organisations visit the college to raise students' awareness of support agencies.

64 The college has established good procedures for monitoring students' attainment and progress, based on the use of National Curriculum and GCSE grading systems. Grades for effort are included in the autumn term progress checks. These are shared with students who then have a general picture of what they need to do next to improve. Any concerns about a student's attendance, behaviour, course work, homework or attitude are noted and followed up promptly. Similarly, if a student has performed exceptionally well, parents are also informed and in many instances certificates are awarded. In some subjects, particularly English, physical education, science, history and geography, good use is made of target setting techniques to help students progress. The missing link is the complete development of secure systems in all departments to track individual students throughout the year and not just from year to year. There is not yet absolute consistency by all departments in the use of individual student target setting to secure continuous improvement for each girl.

65 An awards system to encourage the students is now well developed and clearly documented. Students respond well to the incentive, especially at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, credits are also given for making an excellent contribution to any college activity or aspect of college life, as well as for work. However, the college is aware of the need for more consistency in the application of the awards system.

66 Students who have special educational needs are very well supported in the college, both in and out of class. Effective use is made of the very good individual education plans to help students make very good progress in class. Very good communication exists between the specialist department and the rest of the college about the needs of these students. Students who have English as an additional language are also well supported. The home-college liaison officer makes an outstanding contribution to the support of these students by her knowledge of the students, their families and her commitment to the college.

67 Support offered by other agencies is well used by the college. The college has a particularly good relationship with its attached education welfare officer and the effectiveness of this relationship is one of the reasons for improved attendance. Careers education and guidance is good and many local

organisations, companies and establishments are successfully involved in the programme. Of particular value is the link with the local Rotary Club which provides work placements, tutors for interviews, mentors and speakers. Students in Year 9 enjoy the 'What's my line?' day when they participate in a competition with local people, guessing their jobs.

68 The procedures which the college uses to monitor and promote good behaviour are very effective. Students are motivated to behave well by the merit and credit systems and the recognition they get, and most are deterred from unsatisfactory behaviour by the threat and use of the various sanctions. A few parents' concerns about the ineffective use of the three warnings system are unjustified. Their use, and that of the silent study room as an isolation sanction, is effective. The college is involved in many valuable initiatives to combat bullying. The School Council has introduced an anti-bullying sub-group which is successfully raising the awareness of the school community by the use of newsletters, notice board, questionnaires, an annual poster competition and a new leaflet designed by themselves.

69 Students who experience difficulty maintaining appropriate behaviour are very well supported by the college. Staff demonstrate high levels of patience, tolerance and understanding. Strategies like the Future Pathways curriculum successfully encourage some of these students to involve themselves in their lessons and ultimately even enjoy them, despite an obvious reluctance to conform to college expectations.

70 Effective child protection procedures are securely in place. Health and safety policies, practice, checks and inspections are very regularly completed and reviewed to ensure that the whole college community gives high priority to creating as secure and safe an environment as possible. The building is exceptionally well maintained by a very efficient and effective site management team which also helps promote health and safety. Students who are sick or injured are very well cared for.

• **Partnership with parents and the community**

71 Parents are correct in suggesting that the college provides very good information for them. The prospectus is well presented and regular newsletters are interesting and informative. The recently produced year booklets give parents a clear picture of what their daughters will be studying in each subject area and how parents can help support their learning. There are clear lines of communication between home and college. Tutors and Year Heads spend considerable time and energy getting to know their parents, and parents are therefore clear about who to contact when they have concerns. The college has a particularly conscientious approach to communicating with parents when their daughter has made good progress with her studies, behaviour and attendance and not simply when there are concerns. Any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively.

72 Annual reports fulfil legal requirements to give parents an outline of what has been taught during the year. They provide parents with a useful picture of their daughters' attainment and progress. An indication of what students need to do to improve is provided in some reports with many English reports being examples of good practice. Some reports fail to give straightforward information about strengths and weaknesses within each particular subject in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding. Progress checks are useful additions to the reporting system and are valued by parents and students.

73 Homework is well used by the school and parents are positive about their opportunities to support students' learning at home. Most students use their planners well and parents are involved in the monitoring of these.

74 Parents rightly value the information and guidance that they receive from the learning support faculty during annual statement review meetings and in school reports. Review procedures for monitoring the progress made and learning targets achieved is well managed with both subject and learning support staff involved. Particularly valuable are the opportunities which the college promotes for parents to attend lessons with their daughters, as instanced by a Year 7 literacy lesson where a number of parents worked alongside their daughters.

75 Arrangements to foster links with the local community are good. The college makes effective use of local business, industry and commerce in the well structured careers education and work experience programmes. The 'What's My Line?' event includes many local people and successfully introduces Year 9 students to the world of work. A wide range of local people support the personal and social education programme. The Transition Programme for Year 11 students makes a very positive contribution to the older girls' understanding of the range of support agencies, such as The Citizen's Advice Bureau, which will be available to them on leaving college. Year 10 and Year 11 students have the opportunity to take part in community service for eight afternoons in the year. Involvement with local primary schools, nursing homes and charity shops extends their understanding of the wider community. Community Education is based in the college and a positive relationship has developed. Girls are successfully encouraged to attend courses offered and their awareness of life-long learning is therefore enhanced.

76 Links with local primary schools focus primarily, but not totally, on good guidance and induction procedures. Curriculum information particularly in the core subjects is shared successfully using the Development Group of eight local primaries.

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THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

77 As at the time of the previous inspection the college benefits from strong and clear leadership. The Principal works closely with the governing body to provide clear educational direction for the college. This direction, defined in terms of four goals, underpins all college development and guides detailed planning. These four goals are pertinent, focusing on enabling students to achieve high qualifications, to become competent in information and communications technology, to become independent learners and to participate fully in the life of the college. Progress toward attaining these goals is generally good, though developments to date on helping students become competent in information and communications technology have been slower progress than on the other goals. Good plans are, nevertheless, in place to enable the college to make good progress in this aspect of its work in the near future.

78 The four goals form the foundation of an effective college development plan. Each goal is translated into targets, with careful strategies developed for each. The plan projects forward over three years, setting out a realistic but challenging programme. Detailed planning for each year sets out a range of activities, together with indications of cost implications, staff development needs and criteria to support monitoring and evaluation. Governors work closely with senior staff to produce this plan, the details of which are developed through staff consultation. Governors ensure that the demands of the development plan are taken into account when taking budget decisions, recognising the importance of these priorities for the advancement of the college.

79 Governors maintain a good strategic overview and help to set the strategic vision for the college. Through an effective committee structure, the governing body exercises its roles as monitor and critical friend. Committees of the governing body include key members of the teaching staff as members and others, such as heads of faculty, frequently make presentations to the committees of the governing body about activities and developments in the college. An annual conference for staff and governors also makes a significant contribution to ensuring that governors are well briefed about events and priorities in the college. The finance committee of the governing body is involved in both setting the budget parameters and monitoring expenditure patterns. It is ably supported by the college business manager, who provides regular and up to date information and guidance to support the committee's decision-making. The Principal and the chair of the governors have an effective working relationship based upon mutual respect and a common commitment to improving the work of the college.

80 The Principal is supported by her senior colleagues. A strong senior management team is responsible for both the day-to-day running of the college and for the successful implementation of strategic developments. It is ably supported by an extended senior management team comprising assistant principals, the business manager and the site manager. Each member of this extended team has specific responsibilities which they fulfil very effectively. The two vice-principals are responsible for close liaison with all subject faculties and year teams, regularly reviewing progress and standards with heads of faculties and years. Whilst both are new to their posts, their contacts with middle managers are being effective in focusing attention on the key priorities for further development in the college.

81 Specifically, a classroom observation programme, well organised by an assistant principal, has started to help focus attention on further improving the quality of teaching in the college. Initially undertaken by members of the senior management team, the programme is progressively involving heads of faculty more in evaluation of the work of their teams. In turn, this is strengthening their roles in monitoring and evaluating the wider aspects of the work within their faculties. As yet, this review programme is not sufficiently well linked to target setting for student attainment, but progress toward this stage is good.

82 The Principal is central to all the developments in the college. She is dynamic, challenging and very supportive of both staff and students. Her involvement in the programme of monitoring and support for staff new to the college is just one example of the many ways in which she lives out in practice her commitment to both challenge and support as a means to improvement. She encourages others to take lead roles very effectively, for example charging one senior teacher with responsibility for leading the college in achieving 'Investors in People' status and another with responsibility for establishing the classroom observation programme. The Principal plays a strong role in the day to day life of the college and is regularly visible around the buildings, either teaching, talking or supporting colleagues and students. This approach to management is very effective in inspiring others in the college.

83 Alongside the very effective members of the senior management team, middle managers are becoming progressively more involved in helping improve provision in the college. They are developing programmes to further support students through ever tighter target setting processes and are playing a full part in what are increasingly effective systems for monitoring curriculum provision. Regular meetings with the vice principals is playing a vital role in supporting the professional development of these middle managers.

84 The head of the learning support faculty leads a team of committed teachers and assistants. The learning support teachers are each linked to curriculum areas where, in addition to in-class support, they play an important role working collaboratively with subject teachers in the development of teaching methods and a range of learning materials suited to students of differing abilities. The learning support

assistants provide good support to individual students in lessons. The quality of guidance for staff within the learning support handbook is exceptionally good and supports the effective systems in place to implement the Code of Practice.

85 A governor links with the learning support faculty, meeting regularly with the head of faculty to discuss developments in learning support and appropriate arrangements for provision. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of learning support provision forms an ongoing aspect of the leadership in this faculty.

86 The college sets out its aims clearly in a range of good quality documentation for staff, parents and students. The aims are detailed and are in accord with the four goals which guide current developments and are supported by parents. Above all, they are focused on enabling students to achieve well and to grow in confidence as citizens in a multi-cultural society. The life and work of the college suggests strongly that it is being successful in achieving its aims. Parents and students are regularly consulted on their views of what the college is trying to do and the responses to this consultation are taken seriously. Students are fiercely loyal and they are active in supporting the efforts of staff in achieving the aims of the college. All of this helps to create a very positive ethos in the college, based on mutual support and common practice.

87 The college has made good progress in maintaining and developing the high quality of education provided since the previous inspection and its capacity for further improvement is good. The college meets almost all its statutory requirements. There is some non-compliance with National Curriculum Orders at Key Stage 4 in design and technology and information technology and, as at the time of the previous inspection, the college does not enable students to participate in a daily act of collective worship.

• **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

88 As previously reported, the high quality and commitment of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the college continue to be strengths in contributing to the educational provision. Very good arrangements for staff development considerably enhance the quality of teaching.

89 The overall match of the number, qualifications and experience of the teachers to the demands of the curriculum is generally good. The pupil-teacher ratio and the staff contact ratio are both above the national average. However, those with responsibility generally have adequate non-teaching time. Post-holders in design and technology and information technology, who had inadequate non-contact lessons at the time of the last inspection, now have better time allowances to fulfil their management roles. Staff are experienced, with two-thirds having taught for over ten years, and a third have been in the college for ten years or more. The relatively high level of staff turnover in the past two years, largely due to the increased number on roll and promotions, has resulted in over a third of the staff being in the college for two years or less. There are six newly qualified teachers. However, the changes have been well managed and the college now benefits from the good balance between experienced and recently qualified staff.

90 The match between teachers' qualifications and the subjects they teach has improved since the last inspection and is now good in nearly all departments. There are now only two non-specialists teaching a limited timetable in humanities in Year 7 and there are no adverse effects on educational standards, an improvement on the situation previously reported. However, the use of a non-specialist and an unqualified support teacher to teach mathematics in Year 7 is having an adverse effect on the progress of some students.

91 There is a good match between the demands of the curriculum and the number, qualifications and experience of educational support staff. Learning support staff for special educational needs are experienced, well deployed and much valued in helping to address early difficulties with key skills. The college has undertaken a support staff review in response to the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. Technician support is now adequate and well qualified in art and information technology, though, in terms of hours provided, only just satisfactory in science. Technician support is barely adequate in design and technology. The employment of a full-time librarian enables the library to be available as a resource centre for whole-class or individual use during lesson times.

92 The college is well served by its administrative and clerical staff, who make an important contribution to its smooth running. They are well deployed to give valuable assistance with assessment procedures and help with the administration of work experience. The premises staff and mid-day supervisors provide a dedicated housekeeping and support role for the college and help to maintain its positive image and environment.

93 There are very good procedures for all aspects of staff support and professional development. The induction of newly qualified and newly appointed staff is very effectively organised by a senior member of staff. It includes a centralised programme in conjunction with the LEA and close mentoring by line managers, with classroom observation and three hours of protected non-contact time per term for review meetings. Newly qualified teachers feel well supported. The staff handbook provides staff with information and clear guidance on school matters. Up to date job descriptions exist and are reviewed annually.

94 There is a clear staff development policy which is very effectively implemented through well organised procedures, which have recently been awarded the 'Investors in People' standard. The previous formal appraisal system has been effectively modified to provide an annual staff appraisal interview for all teaching and educational support staff to identify their progress, targets and training needs, linked closely to the college's development and strategic action plans. It is organised by an assistant principal and includes part-time, youth and community staff. The positive outcomes from the classroom observation and feedback are much valued by staff who now also observe others to share good practice. Much school-based training has been organised on issues raised in the last inspection, such as information technology, literacy, raising achievement and positive behaviour for learning. The in-service training budget is devolved to faculties on the basis of one half day per full-time member of staff which is effectively used by most departments, including weekend conferences. Evaluation of courses takes place at department level and dissemination through follow-up workshops, which also promote the professional development of those attending courses. A particular feature of the training programme is the involvement of non-teaching support staff, with effective training of mid-day supervisors as one example.

95 Accommodation is adequate overall, though one of the science laboratories sited in a mobile classroom is in a poor condition and thus has a potentially detrimental effect on standards. There is insufficient office accommodation. This restricts opportunities for senior staff to have confidential discussions and limits the storage of essential items. The library is small and sometimes becomes overcrowded at break and lunchtimes, limiting its overall impact on students' learning. Accommodation for work with students with special educational needs is limited, restricting the range of activities for these students.

96 The college buildings are very well maintained and provide a stimulating environment for students. The college building and grounds are distinctly litter free. Currently there is limited access for disabled students but the planned building programme will incorporate lifts and ramps to enable access for all students to classrooms.

97 Serious concerns were expressed at the time of the last inspection about the inadequacy of learning resources for the effective delivery of the curriculum. The college has made positive efforts to address these and the provision is now largely satisfactory. Current spending on learning resources has increased since last year and is now above average.

98 Nearly all departments are now adequately resourced in books, equipment and materials, both in the quality and quantity and the range to meet the needs of all students. English, art and physical education are particularly well provided for. The resources for developing literacy and reading are good. However, in modern foreign languages, there are still shortages in a range of textbooks and authentic resources, though there is now an adequate supply of readers, a criticism made in the last inspection. Geography still has a shortage of textbooks, particularly at Key Stage 4, so that students are unable to take books home.

99 The college has gone some way to address the considerable under-resourcing in information technology that was previously reported. There are now two new computer rooms and whole-college networking. This has enabled students in Year 7 on an information technology course to achieve more at an earlier stage than previously. The library also has fifteen computers which are well used, especially at lunchtime, and a suite of computers is now in use in design and technology. However, the ratio of computers to students is still well below the national average. There is also a problem of access to the computers, which is particularly affecting mathematics, science, history, geography and religious education.. In these subjects particularly, staff are being constrained in developing information technology through their schemes of work and students are not receiving their full entitlement to information technology through other subjects. Resources for the development of information technology capability in music are inadequate

100 Access to general resources in other areas of the curriculum is now better. Problems of access to the physical education store have been resolved. Though science still has the inconvenience of being widely dispersed, which makes resourcing difficult, there is no adverse effect on standards.

101 There have been important improvements in the library as a learning resources centre, which was heavily criticised in the previous inspection report. The centre has been extended to twice the size and attractively refurbished to provide an appealing learning environment, which is very well used by students, especially at lunchtime. Major stock exchanges every year through the Leicestershire Services for Education leasing scheme ensure regular updating of stock and support for classroom project work, such as humanities, with loan boxes of books. A newly installed computerised library administration system, strongly recommended in the last report, now provides more effective stock control. The committed library staff are aware of the potential of the system to monitor book loans in order to make more informed decisions about stock purchase. However, the ratio of books to students is only slightly more than at the time of the last inspection and still well below the recommended level. Access to the centre by departments, generally for class or small group research projects, is limited to nine lessons a week. This is because it is used for the rest of the time as a teaching area for English and information technology to develop literacy and computer skills.

The efficiency of the school

102 The college benefits from careful financial planning. The college strategic plan is carefully costed as are the linked faculty development plans. Governors keep a careful watch on the balance of expenditure between main budget headings and are kept fully informed about what is happening financially through the work of an effective finance committee. Funds for students with special educational needs and other grants are carefully monitored. The head of the special educational needs faculty ensures that funds are spent efficiently on resources for learning support, including staffing.

103 Careful decision making helps the college make good use of the funds available to it. For instance, in considering the overall balance between teaching and support staff, the college has recently deployed a member of the college administrative team to be responsible for the management of records of all assessment information which the college holds on students.

104 The college's strategic plan sets out clear priorities for the coming three years, with a view to time beyond that. This enables the Principal and governors to ensure that good use is made of the budget. During the past three years, careful budget management has enabled the college to move from a significant overspend to setting a balanced budget with a small but realistic annual carry-forward. Recognising the need for good long term planning, governors maintain a careful watch on the need for expenditure beyond the current year. This guides decisions about staffing, for instance, but also helps deal with other circumstances. For example, it has been recognised that the forthcoming building programme in the college will not provide for all the equipment necessary to furnish the new classrooms and contingency funds are to be earmarked to help meet this need. By acting in this way, senior staff and governors manage resources well.

105 Arrangements for distributing funds to curriculum areas are effective. Heads of faculty manage their funds realistically and they are able to plan carefully from year to year. This is particularly effective in English, science, art and design and technology. In these four subject areas, very good use is made of the resources available and good use is made of them in geography, history, physical education and religious education. In no subject area are resources used inappropriately. Good systems of accountability are in place. In particular, the regular meeting between faculty heads and vice principals is effective in ensuring that resources are being used well.

106 Staff are well deployed, with a good balance between teaching, support, technician and administrative staff. Staff employed to support students with special educational needs are used effectively, both when providing support in lessons and with withdrawal groups. As the number of students increases, space in the building is becoming short, but satisfactory use is made of the accommodation currently available. Some faculties are required to use mobile classrooms which are at a considerable distance from other rooms in the faculty, but careful management of these arrangements ensures that students' attainment is not adversely affected.

107 Financial control in the college is efficient and well managed. The business manager is effective in ensuring that senior staff and governors are kept properly informed. He also manages all support staff efficiently and effectively. There has been no local auditor's report in the recent past, but regular checks in the college help ensure that all appropriate systems are in place and up to date. The good quality of financial control and the regular flow of information has helped governors and the Principal ensure that the college budget remains in balance.

108 Administrative procedures in the college are good. The college runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Work is successfully shared among an efficient administrative team, members of which perform complementary roles effectively.

109 The attainment of students on entry to the college is below average, but they make good progress throughout the college so that, by the time they leave, their attainment is above the national average. Students' attitudes to work and to the college are good and they benefit from a good quality of education, especially teaching. Taking these factors into account, and given that the overall expenditure per student in the college is low when compared with figures nationally, the college gives good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

110 The faculty has maintained the good standards from the last inspection and has improved aspects of curriculum provision such as media studies and the inclusion of more non-literary material for analysis. Examination results have improved. In 1999, the proportion of students gaining Level 5 or above in the English tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national average and well above students from schools in similar social circumstances. The proportion gaining Level 6 was above the national average and very high in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds. Up to 1998 there had been a distinctive upward trend in results. A small dip in results in 1999 had been predicted by the college, based on the entry scores in reading of this particular cohort, which were below the usual intake. Even so, most students had made progress between Year 7 and Year 9.

111 Results in the GCSE examinations in English and English literature in 1999 continued to show improvement. The increase in the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in English has risen by 17 per cent since 1996. In English literature, the proportion is over 20 per cent higher. The performance of the students is well above the national average gaining grades A* to C and is very high compared with schools with students from similar social circumstances.

112 The attainment of students currently in Key Stage 3 is well above average in the higher attaining sets. In most of the middle sets, a substantial number of students produce work that is consistently above that expected for this stage. In the lower sets, most are just below expectations. Speaking and listening skills are good and, at times, very good. In the top sets, many students hold extended dialogues in lessons showing a range of vocabulary and often an acute sense of audience. They can modify the language appropriate to the situation they are in, for instance, from whole class discussions to group work where they discuss ideas with their friends. Lower attaining students have less facility with language but their understanding of complex ideas in such novels as 'Across the Barricades' is shown in well-structured class discussions.

113 Reading is well developed and many students read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, largely because the faculty has planned for this to happen. Reading in Key Stage 3 is well supported by teachers and ancillary support so that even those with difficulties improve. The faculty gives a high profile to reading and this is proving successful. Most students can make notes, skim and scan to locate ideas, and this helps them in their research work. Higher attaining students show good knowledge of terms such as satire and give relevant examples to back this up.

114 There are some excellent examples of stylish and imaginative writing in Key Stage 3. Students in Year 8 have produced a series of beautifully crafted small books containing delightful stories. The autobiographies in Year 7 show good awareness of appropriate vocabulary, and humour adds to their effectiveness. Older students write fluently and with accuracy when answering questions about their set books and in work on the media. There are minor areas of weakness. Some lower attaining students have difficulty in producing neat work and their spelling is erratic. A minority of younger students still struggle with reading and use quite limited vocabulary.

115 The attainment of students currently in Key Stage 4 is above expectations. It is well above average in the higher attaining sets and often above in the middle sets. For other students, attainment is in line except for a few lower attaining students who are just below expectations. They are studying for the Certificate of Achievement which is an appropriate course offering relevant challenge.

116 Many students have a mature understanding of the power of language in creating effect in various types of literature. They use this knowledge well in discussions and in their own writing. In oral work they often get to the nub of an argument succinctly: “*Macbeth wants what others have got!*” They show sensitive skills in evaluating their own progress during oral assignments. A few older students are too reliant on detailed scripts and this reduces the effectiveness of their oral work. Their reading is generally good, being both fluent and expressive. In written work they often provide powerful arguments with evocative phrases to show that in ‘The Crucible’, “*vengeance rips open the community*”. Most students have a good command of technical terms in literature.

117 Progress in lessons and over time is usually good in Key Stage 3. A small number of the higher attaining students in Year 7 is not always stretched in the work in mixed ability groups. There is good progress in the majority of lessons in Key Stage 4. Over time, most students make very good progress except for the very small minority whose motivation and concentration span are limited. With carefully structured and patient teaching these students make satisfactory progress. Students make equally good progress in all aspects of English. The gains made in understanding literature are, however, quite striking at times. A good example occurred in a Year 11 lesson where students were able to seize on the key elements of the short story from a reading of ‘The Fury’ and compose very dramatic paragraphs - setting a scene and creating dramatic tension - after only a brief period of reflection.

118 Students who speak English as an additional language are almost indistinguishable in classes, especially in Key Stage 4, because their command of the language is so good. The close support they receive in Key Stage 3 pays dividends and their results at the end of Key Stage 4 show good and sometimes very good progress. Students with special educational needs make very good progress in Key Stage 3 where carefully targeted lessons give them confidence and increase their literacy capacity. Good progress is maintained at Key Stage 4 and students take appropriate examinations. Overall the least progress is made in spelling and sentence structure.

119 Students have good attitudes to work in most classes. Often they show very good attitudes and the self-determination to ‘go the extra mile’. This occurs when teaching sets up interesting ideas and the students are fired to develop their own original ideas. This was seen in Shakespeare lessons in Key Stage 4 and in work on poetry and the short story in both key stages. Behaviour is good except for a very small minority of students. However, even some of these, despite themselves and because of good teaching, produce satisfactory work in lessons. There are good relationships in classes and students are genuinely concerned to help each other. Many students can work independently and display intellectual sharpness in discussion.

120 There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Indeed, nearly half the teaching is very good with occasional examples of excellence in the teaching of literature. The very good teaching is a major factor in ensuring that standards of attainment remain high. The key characteristics are the challenging tasks that are set with a clear definition of objectives. These give students the structure and clarity to enable them to shape their work. Marking is often exemplary, giving accurate grades and levels and advice on how to improve. There is very good organisation of resources to stimulate original thought and well-motivated responses. Teachers’ obvious subject expertise provides a secure learning climate for students in which they feel prepared to work hard. There are no significant areas of weakness. Some of the work for higher attaining students in Year 7 lacks a depth of challenge as they repeat work from the literacy strategy that they have mastered. This is a very successful faculty that is managed with great energy and skill. The organisation is tight and teamwork is of a high order as teachers work together to raise standards from at or around the average in Year 7 to often well above by Year 11. All the issues from the last inspection have been addressed, and the monitoring of teaching and learning is a notable improvement. Teaching adds depth to students’ moral and social development.

• Mathematics

121 By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. Test results in 1997 and 1998 were broadly in line with the national average, though test results fell below the national average in 1999. This drop was anticipated on the basis of students' prior attainment on entry to the college. Students currently in Key Stage 3 classes are working toward standards in line with national averages. In Year 7, students are developing their understanding of number through work on number patterns and are furthering their knowledge of angles. Higher attaining students in Year 7 can plot co-ordinates in all four quadrants, plot straight line graphs and measure their gradients. Many Year 8 students have a secure understanding of ratio and proportion and can plot graphs with care and precision. Students are encouraged to carry out arithmetical calculations mentally and are not over-dependent on calculators. By Year 9, the majority of students understand the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages. Algebraic skills are developed through the key stage, with all Year 9 students able to substitute values into simple expressions or formulae. Some can solve equations and the higher attaining students are able to expand brackets to form a quadratic equation. A small minority of students have very low attainment in number work. For example, a small number of Year 9 students struggle to recognise the value of large numbers, such as 82,000 and have difficulty with simple divisions without a calculator. The school has a numeracy action plan, which is in its early stages of development and, as yet, is not securing consistency across the curriculum. As part of its strategy to raise students' basic skills, a numeracy school was held during the summer holidays for some incoming Year 7 students.

122 At Key Stage 4, attainment has continued to improve since the last inspection, although the number of students gaining GCSE A* to C grades remains below the national average. For students currently in the college, attainment is of a better standard than in recent examinations, with many students coping with work in line with national expectations. Higher attaining students in Year 11 understand cumulative frequency and can solve simultaneous equations. Students in an upper set in Year 10 can use Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve problems in two and three dimensions. By Year 10, most students have a secure understanding of area, with the lower attaining students able to calculate the area of a circle and others to calculate areas and volumes of several shapes or solids. Lower attaining students in Key Stage 4 take the Certificate of Achievement. These students consolidate their number skills and aspects of mathematics such as producing and interpreting frequency tables and diagrams. The department has a number of effective strategies in place aimed at helping Year 11 students in their GCSE examination preparation by offering opportunities and materials for revision and additional support during lunch times.

123 At both key stages, students make satisfactory progress in most lessons, consolidating their skills and learning new methods of solving problems. In some lessons progress is good or very good and students with special educational needs generally make good progress. This happens when the teaching combines recall of earlier work with clear explanations and the lesson has several activities well matched to the students' stages of understanding and attention spans. Some students do not always understand what they need to do to make better progress and improve their standard of attainment in mathematics. They speak of generic study skills, such as to listen more attentively, but they do not receive from their teachers sufficient guidance on the specific subject skills necessary for their personal improvement. The guidance that mathematics teachers regularly give to students lacks sufficient clarity and this contributes to the lower levels of attainment of students in mathematics compared with many other subjects in the college.

124 Most students are well motivated and hard working, using their time well in lessons and at home. The majority contribute willingly in lessons, while others are sometimes hesitant in their answers

to questions. The development of oral work contributes to students' progress, developing their mathematical language and reasoning skills. While behaviour is satisfactory, a small minority of students are restless and lose focus and concentration during some lessons, which adversely affects their progress. Relationships between students are good and they respect other students' efforts and answers to questions. Students are able to work independently, but many lack confidence, seeking reassurance from the teacher or their peers that their work is correct. Students work well in pairs, as when Year 7 students were using a computer program to estimate angles. All students recognise the care that is needed to show their working fully and accurately. Most students try to maintain a good standard of presentation.

125 Overall, teaching is satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons, though it is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Teaching by qualified, subject specialists is always satisfactory and very good or excellent in one in four lessons. The teaching of two, non-mathematics specialist, members of the department is unsatisfactory and is slowing the progress of some students. Most teachers have high expectations for student attention and effort. They use questions to explore knowledge and understanding and then subsequent questions develop this knowledge and take students forward. Relationships are supportive with frequent encouragement and praise. In the excellent lessons, there is rigour in the development of mathematical vocabulary and expectation of technical accuracy in written work. These lessons are conducted at a brisk pace with very good class management and learning activities that are well matched to student needs and clear objectives for learning outcomes. In a small number of lessons, weaknesses include lack of clarity in instructions and not securing student attention before speaking.

126 Homework is set regularly and used mainly to reinforce work done in class. Students' work is marked in line with the college policy. Teachers provide guidance by showing a correct solution and writing short comments. There is not a consistent expectation by all teachers that corrections must be done or the work finished and thus opportunities to consolidate learning are being missed. There is an insufficiently sharp focus on ensuring that the student has understood details of the work and is feeling confident in her knowledge and ability to work independently and accurately in each aspect of mathematics. Too little independent work by individual students is expected. Some pieces of investigative mathematics are introduced, but too rarely do investigative approaches feature in the learning of number, shape and space and data handling in lessons throughout the college. Students thus miss opportunities to develop the understanding and confidence which can be gained from such activities.

127 The head of faculty leads a team of hard-working teachers. The handbook and schemes of work provide clear guidance for staff. Teaching now takes place in a new building which creates a good environment for learning. Resources are satisfactory with some good purchases recently including books for homework, more graphical calculators and materials to support various learning activities. The department has some good software, but opportunities to incorporate information technology into teaching are limited by difficulties in access to computers. There is a willingness within the faculty to improve provision and raise attainment and a number of strategies are in place. The faculty now has access to a considerable amount of assessment data. This information is being used to analyse student performance at the end of the key stages and to set targets for A* to C grades at GCSE. However, the faculty has not extended the use made of this information to purposeful tracking of an individual's progress, especially during Key Stage 3. In turn, teachers of mathematics are not implementing the necessary strategies to bring about improvements in student attainment.

• **Science**

128 At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in science is above the national average for girls. This standard has been maintained over the last three years. When compared with standards achieved in

similar schools, students are attaining results above average. Higher attaining students achieve standards that are well above those expected. These high standards are being maintained by students currently in the college, with higher attaining students in Year 9, for example, fully appreciating the antagonistic arrangement of muscles in the human body. Lower attaining students, including some with special educational needs, understand and describe the functions of the skeleton. Year 7 students of all levels of attainments use their knowledge of atoms and molecules to devise a correct definition of diffusion.

129 At Key Stage 4 the average points score in GCSE examinations, which reflects the attainment of all students, has been consistently above the national average for girls over the last four years and is steadily rising. Standards are particularly high at both ends of the spectrum of attainment with a higher proportion of students achieving the GCSE A* to C grades than nationally, and very few students failing to achieve a pass grade. The attainment of students currently in the college is similar. A lower attaining group of students in Year 10, for example, struggled to understand the electrolysis of brine but comfortably learned the economic importance of the chemical products of the reaction. Students of average attainment in Year 10 were able to use 'multi-meters' to measure the changing resistance of thermistors. In a Year 11 top set, students successfully completed a series of small experiments designed to test their knowledge and understanding of the major features of plant physiology such as transpiration and photosynthesis.

130 Progress for all students, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is good in both key stages. All classes start promptly, move at a good pace and students are fully occupied in a variety of practical and theoretical work throughout the lessons. The records of work done in almost all students' notebooks are complete, well organised and at a level of difficulty appropriate to age and attainment. In the space of one lesson, for example, students in Year 10 moved from a state of virtual ignorance to a detailed understanding of the properties of cardiac muscle and the double circulation of blood. In Year 11, students of average attainment rapidly learned the principles of polymerisation of hydrocarbons and were able to apply this new understanding to their existing knowledge of plastics. Younger students, who act responsibly and maturely in laboratories, gain very secure knowledge and understanding from the extensive practical work undertaken. Students in Year 9 competently carried out tests on the reactivity of metals and were able to discuss their results with confidence and appreciation of the underlying theory. Frequent tests based on National Curriculum levels provide constant checks on the progress of individual students.

131 Students have very positive attitudes to learning. They are well behaved, attentive and often show great enthusiasm. They co-operate well with each other in groups and, during experimental work, can be trusted to work safely and productively without constant close supervision. Students' good motivation shows clearly in their positive approach to homework and voluntary attendance at revision classes. Most students not only work very hard but also thoroughly enjoy their science lessons.

132 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and in almost nine tenths of lessons, teaching is good or better. Very good or excellent teaching occurs in over two fifths of lessons. A particular strength of the teaching lies in adventurous but careful planning which results in exciting lessons with clear learning objectives. For example, the use of computer technology to monitor pulse rates, the production of short video films of young students miming the behaviour of atoms during the different states of matter and the interactive use of overhead projection transparencies gives teaching great impact. Very good classroom management arises naturally from the stimulating nature of the lessons and the enthusiasm of students. All teachers show good insight into the difficulties experienced by students with special educational needs and devise very successful learning experiences for them. The attention given to literacy problems experienced by some students is very effective. Well displayed word banks of technical terms and great care with worksheets help to improve overall literacy standards.

133 The assessment of students' work has greatly improved since the last inspection and is now excellent. Students' books are marked thoroughly and in a manner which constructively points out error and celebrates success. The results of tests, examinations and all other relevant measures are gathered into a comprehensive database, which is used extensively to monitor the progress of individual students and the effectiveness of teaching. This data is also used to set ambitious academic targets for groups of students and individuals. Each student is involved in negotiating her own target, given clear guidance on personal strengths and weaknesses and advice on the actions needed to improve performance.

134 The college has sufficient laboratories for the present curricular requirements but the siting of the laboratories across the campus has a negative effect on efficiency. The technical staff, who are very well qualified and contribute a great deal to the quality of science education provided, spend much unproductive time transporting equipment over long distances. The lack of a proper central preparation room and the need to duplicate heavy and expensive equipment also prevent efficient use of resources. The use of information technology has been significantly improved since the last inspection. Students of all ages now enjoy a rich experience of data logging using probes which detect light and pulse rates as well as the more usual measurement of temperature and acidity. Use of computers for information retrieval is limited by problems of access.

135 The leadership and management of the department are outstanding. All teachers work together with enthusiasm, mutual trust and a determination to ensure that all students will enjoy learning science to the highest possible standard.

· **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

· **Art**

136 By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of achievement overall are above the national expectation, whilst at Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A* to C are well above the national average and higher than in most other subjects in the college. The high standards at the previous inspection have been maintained at both key stages. The ongoing development of the units within the schemes of work and the quality of teaching are major factors in this high achievement.

137 Students acquire a growing knowledge and understanding of art and its many elements during their Key Stage 3 course, including specialist language and terminology and a very comprehensive range of skills in a wide range of media, which are used with increasing confidence. Students at both key stages demonstrate a very good balance between imaginative and technical skills. They draw with increasing accuracy and use a variety of media, including paint, clay and photographic imagery with imagination and purpose. The critical and historical elements of the curriculum are very well developed with students using the works of an extensive range of artists from different cultures and times, including Renaissance and Impressionist periods, as a starting point or stimulus. This is reinforced by visits to galleries, museums, the use of CD-ROMs, the internet and stimulating whole year group presentations. This is adding a very strong cultural and spiritual dimension to students' practical work and to their knowledge and understanding. Key Stage 4 students benefit greatly from the rich experience and expertise gained in their Key Stage 3 course. They continue to develop these, sustaining themes in their painting and drawing and show an understanding of how the use of media such as colour, line and texture can reflect moods and feelings. Students produce a range of quality outcomes to a very high standard.

138 Students make good progress throughout both key stages, developing and extending their skills, knowledge and understanding and gaining confidence in making visual decisions in various contexts.

Progress for students of all abilities is considerably enhanced by detailed planning and by good quality individual help and support at appropriate times and stages in their work. Students with learning difficulties are very well supported by art staff, enabling them to produce some outcomes of good quality.

139 Students' attitudes to their learning are good at both key stages. They are interested, motivated and enjoy their art. Relationships are good. Students work well together, help each other, sharing media and ideas and can discuss their work with knowledge and confidence. At Key Stage 4, students have a mature approach, they can organise themselves and their time and they take a pride in their work and its presentation. Students understand what is expected, they respect their surroundings and respond well to the codes of the faculty.

140 The overall quality of teaching is good, with teaching in some lessons being very good. The high quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. Planning is detailed, aims and objectives clear, and expectations are high. Lesson introductions are well timed and followed, when appropriate, by directed questioning and discussion. This ensures understanding of tasks and activities within projects. Good use is made of visual materials like prints, work sheets, CD-ROM packages and videos. Demonstrations of techniques such as printing, colour mixing and construction in clay is well presented.

141 A variety of teaching styles is used to good effect and there is a good balance between whole group and individual help. Relationships with students are very good and time in lessons is well used. Teaching is conducted with confidence and enthusiasm in a firm, friendly supportive atmosphere. Staff have a very good command of specialist knowledge and considerable expertise in all aspects of the art curriculum. Students are valued as individuals, praise is given when appropriate and they are encouraged to take responsibility for all aspects of their work.

142 The art curriculum fully meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and provides excellent opportunities for all at Key Stage 4. The art curriculum is broad and balanced and the Year 8 experience of a combined expressive arts theme contributes greatly to students' understanding of the strong links between the disciplines. Planning is thorough and effective for all abilities and enables students to develop as individuals within a structured framework. Ongoing assessment is shared with students and, at Key Stage 4, students know what they need to do to improve.

143 Art is very well managed within the expressive arts faculty. Leadership is effective and supportive with a clear view of the contribution which art makes to expressive arts and the whole curriculum. Art documentation is detailed and informative and it is complemented by a well thought through and well presented faculty handbook that reflects whole college policies. Staff are well qualified, with a comprehensive range of expertise appropriate to the developing art curriculum. They are enthusiastic, work well together and value their subject. The technician provides quality support, which is much valued. Accommodation is adequate, providing a stimulating atmosphere and supporting visual investigation. Resources are of good quality and easily accessible. A range of displays in the art rooms and around the college celebrates students' achievements and contributes to the value of the subject.

Design and technology

144 By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations, but few students achieve the higher levels. Although the 1999 teacher assessment indicates a significant rise in attainment, assessment of the work of students currently in the college suggests that these assessments were too high. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment overall is in line with national expectations. The proportion of students gaining GCSE A* to C grades has improved since the previous inspection, with significant improvement in 1999, closely matching the national average, but is low in relation to many other subjects in the college.

145 In Year 7, students are able to use their own experiences, research from a variety of sources and generate ideas, for example when designing bread products and personalised cushions. They can communicate design ideas through annotated freehand sketching and can identify sequenced planning stages, for example when designing money containers in Year 8 and shorts in Year 9. By the end of Key Stage 3, students can use basic tools and equipment to cut, join and combine materials, but their making techniques are generally under-developed. Students are able to evaluate processes and products. They have some understanding of basic structures and mechanisms, but are less confident in electronics. Students' modelling, formal drawing and planning skills are generally weak.

146 By the end of Year 11, students have a sound understanding of the design process and their research, analytical and evaluative skills are good. Students design with greater creativity, they consider client, social and commercial issues and develop more formal drawing techniques in graphic products, resistant materials and textiles courses, though progress is not sufficient to secure above average results.

147 The majority of students, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress in lessons, with the exception of systems and control. Progress over time is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, where the continuous repetition of some generic designing skills, coupled with the omission of others, hinders progress.

148 Students have positive attitudes to their work in design and technology. They are interested, enthusiastic and keen to succeed. They are attentive, co-operative and able to work collaboratively in pairs, groups and teams. Most students take a pride in their work and most older students make efforts to present their work well, using information technology for word processing and data handling, and self-purchased folios.

149 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good or very good in over half of lessons, but is unsatisfactory in one in five. Most teachers are confident and have a good command of specialist knowledge. Most lessons are well prepared and organised and resources are used effectively. An appropriate range of teaching styles is employed, with an effective balance between whole class tuition, practical demonstrations and individual student support. Teacher expectations are high and have significantly improved since the previous inspection. Pace in lessons is good. Excellent relationships and the use of positive behaviour strategies contribute to student motivation and self-esteem. Good attention is given to the development of literacy skills but less emphasis is given to numerical application. Homework is regularly given, although in some cases the tasks are not appropriately linked to the class work. In those lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the tasks are not well matched to students' needs, with poor questioning of students and objectives are not made clear to them. The large group sizes and limited technician support time place considerable pressure on staff and affects student progress and attainment.

150 Assessment and recording systems are in place but are not fully effective at Key Stage 3 to enable teachers to make accurate assessments, or for students to understand their attainment, progress, and improvement targets. There is insufficient analysis and use of assessment data to track students' progress, set targets and inform future planning and priorities.

151 Statutory curriculum requirements are met at Key Stage 3, but are not fully met at Key Stage 4, with almost half of students not receiving their design & technology entitlement. The curriculum contributes well to students' social and cultural development, for example through the 'Fantastic in Plastic' activity, food and jewellery projects and fashion shows.

152 Design & technology is well managed, and the enthusiastic, conscientious staff function as a cohesive team. Since the previous inspection, departmental documentation and procedures have been revised. However, the curriculum organisation and scheme of work for Key Stage 3 do not fully secure progression, nor provide a firm foundation for Year 10 courses. Risk assessment is not regularly undertaken.

153 Accommodation is well maintained and organised with displays of excellent quality. However, two workshops are rather small to cope with the large class sizes. Resources for learning are adequate in quality and the quantities of text books and computers have increased since the previous inspection. However, the range of plastics, modelling and graphics materials and equipment for the cold storage of food, and for computer-aided design and manufacture, is limited. Finances are effectively deployed, but funding is well below the national average for the subject.

Expressive Arts

154 Within the college, an expressive arts faculty coordinates the work in art, music, drama and dance. Some activities, including a common expressive arts theme in Year 8, help students make effective connections between these different aspects of expressive arts.

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· Drama

155 Attainment in drama at GCSE level compares favourably with results nationally and is well above that in colleges with students from similar social circumstances. The proportion of students gaining A* to C has increased steadily since 1996 so that it was above the national average in 1999. Compared with all subjects in the college, drama had the most successful results in 1999.

156 Progress in lessons in Key Stage 3 is good. Younger students are better at literal representation than developing ideas originally. They improve as they get older and can use techniques such as thought tapping to good effect, producing a character matrix in large groups. By the end of the key stage, students are able to apply ideas learned in earlier lessons to build up effective improvisations. They show a growing understanding of literature by enacting key scenes from Shakespeare in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, progress over time is very good. Students are largely self-motivated. They work well in both small and large groups to produce really dramatic monologues, displaying powerful imagery and evocative gesture, pause and voice control. Students with English as an additional language work well in drama. They make continuously good progress during their time in college and play a full part in all lessons. Students with special educational needs are supported well by the way teachers structure the groups and they make good progress in both key stages.

157 Students have good attitudes to drama. They like the subject and, apart from some lower attaining students who take time to settle, they always give of their best and behave well. Relationships at all levels are very good and students support each other and often respond to performances with spontaneous applause. They all use rehearsal time well. Older students have developed good independence in their work, as seen by the whole group organising themselves to produce a tableau representing lines from a poem. A discussion about the nature of God in Year 11 was very high-powered.

158 Teaching is always at least good and sometimes very good. Among the main strengths are the good use of time and space to encourage students to think creatively for themselves. Teachers constantly reinforce the importance of precision in language and this helps students to develop clear images for what they intend to perform. Questions are carefully phrased to support this process. There is very good use of homework to build on what students learn in lessons.

159 The department is well led. Accommodation and resources are adequate and the staff use them as well as they can. The purposeful and energetic rapport that exists provides a pleasant working environment for students and contributes to the good standard of work being produced. Drama gives opportunities for students to develop their social, moral and intellectual understanding.

• **Dance**

160 Attainment in dance by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the expected level in planning, performing and evaluating. Students are able to learn and perform steps and gestures accurately and to remember increasingly complex sequences. They know the possible components of group dances and are able to select from a range of movements using dynamics, levels and shape. They are able to make constructive comments about each other's performance.

161 Dance is taught only as an examination subject in Key Stage 4. The results of the 1998 examination results in dance were below those achieved nationally at A* to C grades, but similar to national results for A* to G grades. The number of students taking the examination in 1999 was small, but the overall result was low. These low standards are not reflected in the work currently being produced in Years 10 and 11. Studying dances of the 1920's, students pick up the pace and rhythm of the music and perform the Charleston with confidence, verve and style, accurately replicating the main features of the dance.

162 Progress, since students started their dance courses in September, is very good. They can perform a dance based on a theme 'Whales'. In preparation, they have researched whales, analysed the way they move and planned partner and group work based on similar kinds of movement. From a varied background of experience, all are able to perform a dance with clarity of action and an awareness of other dancers. Progress is good in Key Stage 4 and includes the students' ability to compose and perform solo dances. Their knowledge and understanding of good dance performance enables them to analyse their own performance and give critical advice to others.

163 Students are fully involved in dance lessons, ready to contribute ideas and to work together to develop group dances. They work very hard with concentration which is maintained throughout long and demanding sessions. Whatever their ability in dance, students make great efforts to remember the movements they are taught and are often helpful to each other in trying to improve.

164 Teaching ranges from good to excellent. The teacher's planning ensures that lessons are physically demanding and mentally challenging, but within the students' capabilities. Her expertise is inspiring and the students respond to her high expectations of their performance and effort. Lessons are varied, often with a mix of taught dance and student improvisation. On occasions, support for one or two students leaves others needing help, but the pace of each session is such that little time is left without further practice and guidance for the whole class. Relationships are excellent; lessons are hard work and students clearly enjoy them.

165 The dance department follows the agreed processes for assessment laid down within the expressive arts faculty. Using observation and video evidence, each student is assessed regularly and contributes to an analysis of her own attainment. Examination components are diagnosed and work

planned to address weaker areas. The processes are very effective in enabling students to improve the quality of their work in dance.

• **Geography**

166 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that the attainment of students has declined since 1997. Whilst the majority of students' attainment is in line with national expectations, the proportion achieving higher grades is lower than national expectations, and much lower when compared with the national figures for girls' attainment.

167 For students currently in Key Stage 3, most achieve standards which are in line with the standards expected nationally, reflecting the teachers' assessments. A small number of students achieve at lower levels. Students acquire a satisfactory range of knowledge and understanding about places and geographical processes, and opportunities for fieldwork and investigation have improved. However, opportunities are lost to link this work effectively with class work and to focus it tightly as a means of incrementing skills. In Year 7, students acquire mapping skills, undertake simple weather study, and learn something of the local area, shopping hierarchies and the pattern of urban land use in Leicester. In Years 8 and 9 they learn about development in Japan, river processes and the impact of flooding in Bangladesh and global tectonic processes. Through good use of the atlas and world maps they develop a secure knowledge of place.

168 Higher attaining students in Key Stage 3 confidently use a range of geographical terms in their discussion and writing, and lower attaining students make good use of personal glossaries to check their own understanding. Students recognise, describe and begin to offer explanations for geographical patterns, for example in Year 7 in a simple micro-climate study near the school buildings, in Year 8 in variations in levels of development in Italy and in Year 9 studies of plate tectonics. Students write competently, with the best writing being fluent and well constructed. Whilst using conventional writing such as short answers, they also have the opportunity to write in different styles and for different audiences; for example writing letters explaining the reasons for the location of a hypermarket, news reports on the Bangladesh flood, and producing storyboards for a television news report. Work through the key stage now gives students more opportunities to use a good range of geographical skills, graphs and diagrams, such as bar and line graphs, climate charts, divided rectangles and scattergraphs to record and interpret information. Students summarise information well using tables, spider diagrams and bullet points, and by the end of the key stage are able to make good use of and select information from high-level sources of information. For example, Year 9 students read and select information from quality newspapers to identify the location, causes and effects of an earthquake. The best can distinguish effects on property, people and secondary effects for themselves.

169 The progress of students in lessons is never less than satisfactory. It is good in developing map work skills, where in Year 7 all students became competent in the use of grid references, use of the key to identify Ordnance Survey symbols, following a route and the simple use of scale. Through the key stage, progress is satisfactory overall. The progress of higher attaining students is limited by the lack of pace in some lessons. They develop their skills to sequence events, classify and link cause and effect. Year 9 lessons on the recent Turkish earthquake demonstrated all these skills being used well across the ability range.

170 Results from GCSE examinations in 1998 indicate attainment below national averages but 1999 results show a marked improvement on previous years, with almost two-thirds of students gaining A* to C grades. Progress in lessons is good, and is good overall through Key Stage 4.

171 During Key Stage 4, students continue to deepen and widen their knowledge and understanding.

This is exemplified well by Year 10 work on the process and impact of development on aspects of life in the United Kingdom, Europe and Asia, and by Year 11 work on the Carajas Project in Brazil. Higher attaining students use geographical vocabulary with increasing confidence and accuracy and a role-play exercise in Year 11 lessons showed the students' ability to offer cogent arguments which they were able to sustain well with sound evidence and well-founded opinions. Their investigative work into the Fosse Retail Park gives opportunities for the further development of their skills in simple hypothesis testing, data collection, wider forms of presentation, effective analysis and the drawing of valid conclusions.

172 Students' attitudes to work are never less than satisfactory, and mainly good or better, representing a significant improvement since the last inspection. Across both key stages they are attentive, behave well, and are responsive and willing participants in the activities of the lessons. They work well together in groups, being co-operative and supportive of each other. In Year 10, students were fully engaged in their task of developing posters to explain the process of global warming, with the groups quickly and effectively deciding on content and the division of tasks. Year 11 groups were thoroughly engaged and involved in their role-play exercise on the Carajas Project with some excellent examples of students in both ability groups thoroughly immersed in their roles.

173 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory, with a large majority being good. The problems of non-specialist staffing highlighted in the last inspection have been partially addressed, and no adverse impact on standards is now evident. Particularly effective aspects are the good planning and timing with aims made clear to students at the beginning of lessons. Questions are used well for debriefing and checking recall and understanding, but in some cases the lengthy nature of the sessions reduces the pace of the lesson. A variety of teaching methods is used, including whole class work, seen in Year 10 work on the savanna in Kenya, individual work such as Year 8 work on the Bangladesh floods, paired work as in Year 7 map work, and group work in Years 9 and 11. The enterprising use of current events, as in Year 9 work on newspaper reports and television news footage of the Turkish earthquake, brings immediacy, relevance and impact to the work. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. However, the pace of teaching sometimes remains slow, and there is too little variation in the dynamics of lessons. The overall effect of this, in Key Stage 3 in particular, is to slow progress. Teachers have high expectations of their students and are encouraging in lessons. The marking of students' work is regular and encouraging comments are made. Teachers still provide insufficiently clear guidance to students about what it is that they are doing well, and what they need to do improve their own level of attainment. Individual target setting for students is in its early stages, and as yet makes no clear impact on attainment.

174 The department is well managed, despite the constraints of time, limited staff development and the other responsibilities of the teacher in charge. Resources are generally satisfactory. The library provides a good range of appropriate texts, and there are now good sets of atlases which are well used. However, students do not have their own text books, which limits the variety of tasks that can be set for homework and leads to heavy reliance on photocopied, monochrome materials. Access to information technology is still restricted. There are no computers available in geography classrooms and access to the computer suites is limited. Although some use is made of the internet as a research tool, opportunities to use computers for data handling are not available and information technology skills development is not effectively built into the schemes of work.

• History

175 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is just below national expectations, as indicated by the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in teacher assessments in 1999. This is an improvement compared with 1998. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below the national average for girls, as indicated by the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades at GCSE in 1999. The proportion of those attaining A* to G is also below the national average. Girls do less well in

history than in most of their other subjects. Although these latest results are better than those for 1998, there has not been a marked upward trend since the time of the last inspection.

176 By the end of Key Stage 3, nearly all students develop good understanding of chronology, causes and change. Most learn sound skills of enquiry and organisation. They learn how to examine and comment on sources and are beginning to evaluate them for bias and reliability. The overall level of attainment of students currently in Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. This is an improvement on the situation previously reported. Nearly all students understand chronology and recognise different types of sources. Most students can select, record and use evidence from pictorial and written sources, as when lower attaining students and those with special educational needs in a Year 8 class, could effectively use a range of pictures of Queen Elizabeth I to record evidence into carefully prepared note-making frames. Nearly all students have sound enquiry and organisational skills, promoted by well-structured research tasks in Year 7 on Roman life. Most students have good speaking and listening skills, with higher attaining students expressing themselves fluently and clearly in lively group discussions. Higher attaining students in Year 9 are achieving standards well above the national average. Their good analytical skills enable them to evaluate and interpret sources well and to recognise bias and reliability, as when Year 9 students explored the effectiveness of First World War recruiting posters. They also evaluate causes well, though not to prioritise them. There are good skills of extended writing amongst higher attaining students and sound skills amongst middle attaining students.

177 Attainment of students currently approaching the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average and better than that in recent examination results. This is a direct consequence of the use of a wider range of teaching strategies. Most students have a broad understanding of change and continuity and sound skills of research and organisation. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs have sound note-making skills and are aware of causation. However, skills of extended writing and the ability to analyse evidence from a variety of sources, though good in higher attaining students, are less developed in average attaining students. Their factual recall of basic knowledge is sometimes also weak.

178 Students' progress over time is good at Key Stage 3 compared with their attainment on entry to the college. In lessons it is nearly always good, frequently very good and only very rarely unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4, progress over time has been unsatisfactory when taking into account students' prior attainment. However, progress made by students in lessons is now better, being good in half of lessons and never unsatisfactory. This is an improvement on the situation reported at the time of the previous inspection. It is very much attributable to the generally high quality of teaching and expectations, especially in promoting more varied teaching strategies to raise the level of history skills. Students have responded well to these improvements. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs also make good progress in developing appropriate note-making and source handling skills as suitable materials such as starter sentences, writing frames and simpler text are provided. They also receive effective in-class support from learning support teachers and assistants. Higher attaining students in Year 9 make very good progress in producing coherent, empathetic writing, combining clear understanding and analysis, for example, in expressing the views of different members of Edwardian society by taking on their roles.

179 At Key Stage 4, skills of research and organisation are further developed and students of all abilities understand the main characteristics of a single period. However, many middle and lower attaining students have undeveloped recall of factual knowledge and understanding of developments across periods in their work on the history of medicine. Skills of extended writing in various forms, interpretation and analysis are well developed in higher attaining students and some middle attaining students, but less well developed in others. This is constraining more middle attaining students from achieving well at GCSE.

180 The attitude of students to work throughout the college is good in nearly all the lessons and often very good. It is never unsatisfactory. It is best at Key Stage 3 where it is very good in over half the lessons. This is a definite strength of the department and an improvement on the situation previously reported, especially in Year 7 where response was criticised for being variable. Nearly all students listen attentively, settle quickly and concentrate well for the whole lesson. They are frequently eager to answer questions and to participate. They behave well and have good and respectful relationships with teachers. They cooperate well with each other and show respect for each other's views and feelings during the frequent opportunities for paired and group work. Nearly all students work well by themselves and strive hard with difficult tasks, including lower attaining students and those with special educational needs, who are motivated by appropriate support materials and effective extra help in class from the learning support department. They readily accept the responsibility for undertaking research tasks on their own and use various reference sources for information. They do homework regularly. Most students across the attainment range take a pride in their work and only rarely is it left uncompleted. History is a popular subject in the college with the number opting for it at Key Stage 4 similar to national levels.

181 The quality of teaching throughout the college is good or better in nearly three-quarters of lessons and is frequently very good. It is only very rarely unsatisfactory. It is best at Key Stage 3, where over half the teaching is very good. This is a significant improvement compared with the situation previously reported when half was unsatisfactory. This has clearly contributed to raising the level of attainment. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well, with learning objectives clearly explained to the students. Classroom management and control are good and there are high standards of discipline and good relationships with the students. This is seen particularly during the productive group work activities which are now a regular feature of the teaching, especially at Key Stage 3.

182 A wider variety of teaching strategies is now deployed, promoted by the revised and coherent schemes of work. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing history skills by encouraging more individual enquiry and problem solving by the students. Materials are being provided which match the needs of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs. The clear educational direction of the head of department, the classroom observation and ready sharing of ideas are helping to disseminate good practice and this is having a good effect in improving the students' progress. This progress is monitored through the regular setting of homework which is generally thoroughly marked with helpful suggestions to enable the students to improve. Good assessment procedures are in place, with results accurately moderated to National Curriculum levels and centrally recorded. At Key Stage 4, the effectiveness of these procedures is restricted by insufficiently rigorous monitoring of students' progress by comparing regular test results against predicted grades and individual targets. The head of department is well aware of the need for developments in the use of information technology and history trips as additional resources in order to promote further the good progress already made in the quality of teaching.

· **Information technology**

183 At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in information technology of the majority of students meets national expectations and the attainment of most students in lessons is in line with national standards. The majority of students can input data and simple formulae into a spreadsheet package, edit text and numbers and understand the results obtained from the changes. They use word processing successfully to word-process assignments in English and compose poems in their own time for music, and can desk-top publish simulated newspaper front pages for media assignments in English. They can search and re order information in simple databases.

184 Attainment of students entered for external examinations meets national expectations at the

beginning of their second year of study. GCSE students, including those with special educational needs, can design attractive business documents and cards to specifications requested by interview with local business people, and follow up to seek their client's views on the effectiveness of the product. GCSE students can use Internet sources, for example, to seek relevant information to help them with their course work.

185 At the end of Key Stage 4, most students can use basic word processing, database and spreadsheet software and can apply their skills in other contexts, for example for simple data analysis in design and technology work, presenting their results in graphical or chart form. They word process assignments for geography and science, and use desktop publishing for media assignment work in English. They can use datalogging equipment in science to explore and record measurements of, for example, heart rate.

186 During Key Stages 3 and 4, the progress of the majority of students is satisfactory. In lessons in Key Stage 3, most students learn new commands for word processing, database and spreadsheet use, for example how to use the right-hand mouse button to display an alternative menu and how to search a database for information about particular kings and queens of England. Higher attaining students can complete a computerised test and successfully answer questions testing their knowledge of technical spreadsheet terms. Enthusiastic Key Stage 3 students use the Internet at lunchtime to explore subjects, for example the Impressionist painters, in preparation for art lessons. Others enjoy exploring subjects of personal interest at lunchtime, for example pet care using the Internet, and the use of electronic mail.

187 Most GCSE students in Key Stage 4 develop the ability independently to explore the use of a variety of fonts, shapes, colours and backgrounds in desktop-publishing business cards and progress to being able to produce a complete set of well-designed business documentation. They learn the effects of inputting instructions to control a virtual traffic lights system. Some Key Stage 4 students work in their own time and on their own behalf to word process or desktop publish work for other subjects, for example producing posters for geography. Higher attaining students at this key stage also work independently in their own time to produce well-designed and presented guidance and instructions to help others use electronic mail and the Internet, responding well to this opportunity for responsibility.

188 Students' response is good overall, and sometimes very good. Where response is very good, students work particularly well in pairs, for example alternating the use of the terminal and discussing angle estimation together in mathematics, and pupils of a very wide range of abilities work independently and with sustained concentration on GCSE coursework. Relationships in paired work are mainly productive, focusing on achievement of the work in hand. Students are able to talk about what they have learned and explain what they are doing from scratch, for example, how they have downloaded an Internet page, what they would do to move back to a previous page and problems they have encountered and solved. Students are encouraged to work independently at home and in the lunchtimes, and where they have access to facilities, they take advantage of this opportunity. They work co-operatively in class and are careful with equipment. Relationships with teachers are sound.

189 Statutory requirements for information technology are not fully met. There is limited evidence of wider discussion taking place of the social, economic, ethical or moral issues raised by information technology. The college has sensible restrictions on access to the Internet, the reasons for which are shared with those students who use it. Checking of accuracy of information is limited, however, and no questioning of the plausibility of information was observed.

190 The ratio of computers to students is low, but there are plans to improve this to bring the college into line with national average levels within the next few months. This is a great improvement on provision since the time of the previous inspection. The accommodation and equipment provided is of good quality, suitable booking systems are in operation, and there are plans to set up computer

clusters for science. This, together with staff development opportunities, has been supported by successful bids to the National Grid for Learning. There are plans in most subject schemes of work to use information technology. Attainment is recorded for all pupils at the end of Key Stage 3.

191 Student access is still necessarily restricted however for a majority of subjects. The amount of time for discrete information technology work in Key Stage 3 has improved greatly since the previous inspection, but, in Key Stage 4, learning opportunities are limited for the majority of students. Their experience in discrete information technology lessons is mainly of communicating and data-handling. There is no use at either key stage of specialist information technology applications in music, history or religious education, and limited use in other subjects of the curriculum including design and technology, in both key stages. General studies classes provide only a five period module of information and communications technology for Key Stage 4 students. Teachers of other subjects are not confident in the assessment of information technology achievement.

192 Teaching in information technology classes is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the pace of lessons is slow and some students wait for long periods to access work and are not provided with alternatives. Teachers mainly have good subject expertise and lessons are mainly well planned. Written feedback to students is clear and indicates how improvements may be made. In GCSE lessons, individual targets are set for students, based on coursework booklet instructions. There is insufficient demand within schemes of work to broaden students' understanding and extend students' achievement at higher levels.

193 Management and co-ordination does not currently focus on enabling sufficient access to resources. Nor does it ensure that, within schemes of work in all subjects, there is enough emphasis on providing sufficient breadth and challenge to meet all requirements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Many staff lack confidence in teaching and assessing information technology capability and there is insufficient sharing of staff experience and expertise to help overcome this lack of confidence. Arrangements for monitoring the use of information technology are inadequate.

• **Modern foreign languages**

194 By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in both French and German is in line with national expectations. GCSE French results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 were above the national average and improved markedly in comparison with those of 1998. Students' results at the college are broadly in line with the average for schools in similar contexts. In lessons, standards of attainment are in line with national expectations with high attaining students in Key Stage 4 exceeding them. French results at the end of Key Stage 4 have been improving since 1997. There have been very few entrants for GCSE German examinations in recent years.

195 By the end of Key Stage 3, when listening and responding, the majority of students show an understanding of a good range of classroom language, including passages and dialogues made up of familiar language which focus on main points and provide some support with items being repeated. In speaking, they demonstrate a good retention of vocabulary previously acquired. They take part in guided exchanges based on prompts and modelling from the teacher. Their pronunciation is not always accurate, mainly because teachers do not regularly attend to this aspect of the work. Students read short texts from worksheets with approximate pronunciation. Standards in reading are satisfactory but often confined to comprehension and not focused on developing independence and using context to deduce meaning. Skills in writing are better, with higher attaining students writing guided compositions and applying their knowledge of grammar, whilst students of average ability write shorter pieces. Higher attaining students in Key Stage 4 demonstrate good knowledge of vocabulary, tackle authentic texts on world issues and show understanding of a range of written materials. However, they are less confident when reading aloud. Students produce a range of writing in different forms with good

examples of extended pieces on gender roles.

196 Progress is satisfactory for the majority of students in both key stages and is good for higher attaining students in Key Stage 4. It is reflected in sustained opportunities for language practice and in students' ability to build on what they have learnt previously, with homework playing a critical role in enabling students to learn vocabulary and use it in new circumstances.

197 The majority of students show interest and are attentive. They collaborate well during role-play and sustain work without prompting from the teacher. The majority of students respond positively to the teacher's use of target language and some are beginning to use it beyond the confines of language activities. Students are well behaved, courteous and often respond in the target language when approached by adults. Relationships are positive across both key stages and students readily help each other. In some classes, many students do not readily and spontaneously participate in oral work and tend to be shy, taking part only when prompted.

198 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, though it is good or better in nearly half of lessons. In all lessons, appropriate emphasis is given to oral practice based on a wealth of visual prompts which are used creatively to introduce vocabulary and language patterns. Teachers use the target language for most of the lessons and spend class time effectively to maximise learning. Where teaching is good or very good, the target language is used to give instructions, explain vocabulary and carefully ensure that meaning has been conveyed to students without resorting to the use of English. This was well exemplified in a German lesson in Year 8, where the teacher used coloured transparencies to introduce descriptions of hair colour, weaving in challenging grammatical features and effectively conveying meaning through the use of several examples of the language pattern being focused upon. After sufficient oral practice, the same points were effectively reinforced through listening to recorded descriptions and using textbooks as a back-up for understanding. The teacher was careful throughout the lesson to check that students had grasped key points and involved them in providing similar descriptions. In the majority of lessons, in spite of some progress since the last inspection, not enough opportunities are provided to enable students to use the target language outside the confines of guided activities and help them deal with less predictable situations.

199 Planning of the curriculum at both key stages is through topics and this means that there is insufficient focus on a range of language skills and on communication in the target language. In turn, this limits continuity and progression in the development of these skills. Some aspects of cultural awareness arise incidentally in textbooks and are supported through trips, but are not being addressed systematically in the schemes of work. Provision for information technology is being developed and is being used effectively to cater for low attaining students. Insufficient time is allocated to French in Year 7 and for students studying two languages in Years 8 and 9. This has a negative impact on the extent of progress made to enable sufficient numbers to carry on with German or take two languages in Key Stage 4. Grouping arrangements for students studying French in Years 10 and 11 make movement between sets difficult and this slows some students' progress. Whilst some provision is made to explore cultural diversity, there are few opportunities provided for students to learn about countries where French or German are spoken. Students with special educational needs benefit from the dedicated support of a specialist teacher who liaises closely with the languages faculty. The Future Pathways course and links with Peugeot for low attaining students in Key Stage 4 enhance their learning within a vocational context.

200 Procedures for assessment are satisfactory with regular testing at the end of units of work. However, much of the assessment in Key Stage 3 is not firmly based on the use of National Curriculum levels and the use of assessed samples of work to guide teachers. This means that there are not consistently clear and agreed expectations; nor is there a secure base for detailed target setting for students. Good use is made of assessment outcomes and GCSE examination results in Key Stage 4 to

identify under-achievement, to set targets and provide guidance for coursework in order to help improve attainment. However, results are not analysed to take account of the ethnic background of students. Appropriate certification has been developed to cater for students for whom GCSE is not suitable.

201 Procedures for development planning are well established in the faculty and priorities are clearly identified in the context of whole college areas of development and on the basis of reviewing students' performance in GCSE examinations. All members of the faculty are involved in the planning process and leadership on areas of development is allocated on the basis of the expertise of individual members of the faculty. Resources are adequate and accessible with good provision of magazines and dictionaries, but the shortage of textbooks raised at the time of the previous inspection has not been addressed; much of the work is based on worksheets and insufficient use is made of authentic materials, including audio and video broadcasts.

• **Music**

202 Overall, standards of attainment in music are in line with national averages. The best of those students taking GCSE music achieve A* grades, though the average results are below those for comparable schools. Results are consistently above the average for most subjects taken at the College. The performance of music is often a strength, supported as it is by instrumental tuition in or out of College. Students currently in Year 11 study in their spare time and are working at standards in line with the national average. Students write fluently about the background and process of their compositions. They are well prepared for the listening paper, developing skills of analysis of a wide range of music. In composition, students use the techniques learned earlier. However, progress is seriously limited by the lack of computer-aided facilities. The groups include students of varying ethnic origins and academic ability, all succeeding well in particular aspects of the course. For example, there are some very strong, expressive singers.

203 Teacher assessment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 has been below the average level for comparable schools, with nearly half achieving at or above national expectations. Students currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 are achieving much better than this. Throughout Key Stage 3, students make good progress through structured learning in practical skills, especially keyboards, in aural awareness and in self expression through composition. Tasks in each area receive some imaginative and creative treatment. In listening, students use the guidance given and often the appropriate technical terms, like 'timbre' from a Year 7 girl. Improvised exercises are stored in some written form, aurally and occasionally recorded. Starting in Year 7 with such images as 'bonfire night' and the use of graphic scores, students progress to composing 'Christmas pieces' and to using structures such as variations, blues and different modes. A Year 8 group produced a piece with real rhythmic drive, though students are generally less confident when singing in small groups. There are some outstanding exceptions to this, for example those who volunteer to audition for solo parts in productions such as 'Fiddler on the Roof'. Students can recall and use previous learning and are usually aware of the purpose of each new step. Those with differing ability learn together in mixed groups; those of differing ethnic origins achieve equally well. Girls who do best at music use the scope often provided to extend tasks, for example through longer and more complex compositions, reaching a higher standard of attainment. Students at Key Stage 3 also have no opportunity to use computers for creative work, thus limiting their overall progress.

204 All students enjoy their music lessons and behave very well in them. Those in Key Stage 3 respond well to learning activities, interacting happily in both class and group work regardless of ethnic origin and ability. The level of co-operation is commendably high. Sharing of equipment and movement to work spaces, including those outside the classroom, is done calmly and purposefully. When invited to appraise each other's pieces, they do so sensitively. One Year 9 group performed an accompanied rap, devised in class, in a supermarket as part of a community project. In addition to

those who volunteer for the college's extra-curricular activities, a few join music productions at the neighbouring boys school. It is significant that Year 11 GCSE students are committed enough to stay at college after the end of the normal day on two days a week for their classes.

205 The teaching of music is good. High standards of attention and behaviour are expected consistently, reinforced when necessary. Teachers' enthusiasm and energy generates enjoyment and concentrated work from nearly all students. Teachers know their pupils well and are alert to the opportunities to advance the learning of individuals, especially those of lower ability. Assessment is ongoing and done openly, with students participating in the process of evaluation. Time is generally used well, as are the available resources and accommodation, particularly those areas outside the classroom used for group work. Well-focused lessons allow appropriate time for this, teachers' time being divided between students. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are assured, except for the use of information technology in music, for which urgent training is necessary. Their understanding of music's place within the arts is developing as a vital support. New materials for learning are well prepared, usually word-processed. When published materials are used, teachers check the understanding of all students. More could be done in both key stages to emphasise concepts in the arts, such as texture and shape, by display as well as in words. Homework is used well, though marking lacks detailed and specific guidance for students. Good teaching of GCSE students is characterised by careful attention to the needs of each individual in the group.

206 Apart from information technology, music follows National Curriculum requirements and is well balanced. Schemes of work are thorough and offer an integrated approach to the various aspects of the subject. Students are given the tools to tackle tasks, for example points for appraisal and key words. Listening is wide, from a variety of cultures and times, including some current pop. Keyboard playing and musical literacy are taught and practised systematically, to good effect. Creative work, through improvisation and composition is developed regularly from the first term. The chosen GCSE syllabus is made clear to students, including criteria for assessment, and a suitable pattern of study is followed, giving appropriate balance to each aspect. Assessment procedures follow the faculty and college systems and include elements of target setting for students of all abilities. Detailed records are kept and processed, but summaries of these, especially those at the end of key stages, are not up to date or easily accessible. Individual education plans are adapted for perceived needs by the expressive arts faculty but not specifically for music.

207 Changes since the last inspection are mostly positive. Music's firm base within the expressive arts faculty, well known to students, helps their awareness of its function, jointly with the other art forms, within societies and cultures, and provides a necessary counterbalance to the technical details of how music works. They feel supported by the common interests of the other art forms, appreciating the stronger voice this gives in curriculum management issues. An integrated module, run by the faculty during Year 8, supports this wider view for students. Accommodation has improved and is now satisfactory, though rooms are too small for flexible use. While resources for learning are otherwise adequate, the absence of computers fitted for music sequencing, notation and recording means that the college cannot meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum in music and the progress and attainment of students is thus restricted. Apart from CD-ROMs, they have no knowledge, experience or role models in the college of an art form and industry increasingly dependent on computers.

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· **Physical education**

208 Attainment overall at the end of both key stages is in line with expected levels. Planning and evaluating is better than in many schools whilst the skills in some games and in gymnastics, are slightly below expectations by the end of each key stage. In Key Stage 3, students make a good start with

hockey. In Years 7 and 8 they learn football and, through their knowledge of support play, are able to apply the tactical aspects to hockey. Skills of hitting, stopping and dribbling are sufficient to enable students to play small sided games competently. In gymnastics, students evaluate each other's work and show a good knowledge of key words for improving performance. They are able to jump on and off apparatus neatly and land safely, but they do not choose to use rolls or activities where the weight is on hands. They plan and perform appropriate exercises to improve fitness and know how to raise their pulse rates, and why and how to improve flexibility and mobility. They are able to throw and catch with appropriate skill but, in netball, students do not use the footwork rule to improve their throwing action.

209 The results of GCSE examinations in physical education improved considerably in A* to C grades in 1999, having been well below those achieved nationally and those of other subjects in the college in 1998. The work of the current Year 11 examination group is in line with expected levels of attainment in practical work, but below that level in theory. Nevertheless, the students are able to research, recall facts learned earlier and prepare their own work sheets on health and diet. Lower attaining students can use the Internet to check the accuracy of examination answers. In the programmes planned for Year 11 students, they take on different roles as members of a 'sports club' and organise mini-tournaments, coaching, umpiring and scoring. They show good knowledge of the responsibilities of each member and are able to umpire and coach effectively.

210 Students work hard and co-operatively in physical education lessons. They take on responsibility for their own learning in parts of many lessons and do this to good effect. In particular, they work in groups to plan sequences of movement, supporting and advising each other so that the final performance is the best they can achieve. They are competitive but sensitive to each other's weaknesses and are helpful rather than critical. Behaviour is generally good and pupils respond well both as participants and observers. Under the guidance of the teachers, the Sports Development Team of thirty students from Years 8 to 11, takes a very active role in organising and publicising a wide range of extra-curricular activities and in liaising with sports clubs and coaches outside the college.

211 Teaching is always satisfactory and is good or better in more than a third of lessons. All teachers in the physical education department focus on independent learning, a school aim and focus. Planning and evaluating are key elements of all lessons and are carefully selected so that all students can be involved, whatever their level of academic or physical attainment. Activities match the levels of expertise of the students so that there is challenge for the most able and those with lower attainment are able to work at an appropriate pace and stage of learning. This was particularly effective in the GCSE theory work on health and drugs, in the Year 11 courses and in hockey. The students' knowledge of warming up before exercising is built up and they are then expected to plan and lead their own pulse-raising programme. Demonstrations are clear and coaching points are made and followed by reinforcement and questioning to ensure that the students understand. At times and in some lessons, the focus is too much on students learning for themselves through observation with the emphasis on developing their skills being secondary. This, coupled with the short time allowed for some activities, contributes to the lower standards for some students than they should attain

212 The college offers a wide range of activities in both key stages and some in-house courses which are very appropriate for the students in Key Stage 4. Whilst resourcing is good and accommodation is extensive, there is no suitably resourced space for tennis, which is therefore no longer in the curriculum. Assessment is very strong, based on systematic evaluation by staff and students. Extra-curricular sport is available to most students through inter-tutor group tournaments. Links with coaches and sports clubs are developing well and some students become club members or attend coaching sessions, but there are no established teams or inter-school matches for enthusiastic and talented players. This omission is the result of a lack of commitment in the past, or demand at present and the wide range of other activities offered by the college.

213 The documentation for the department is exceptionally good and work is available for wet days or for absence when lessons are taken by non-specialist staff. There is agreement about the approach to teaching, following careful evaluation of teachers' individual styles. The departmental development plan is realistic and manageable and strategies are identified to achieve the desired goals. New and innovative programmes have been devised.

Religious education

214 Standards overall by the end of Key Stage 3 are well in line with those expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Higher attaining students produce very good written work which is imaginative, well-argued and well-presented. Most students present work well and write accurately and neatly but the work of lower attaining students is limited to basic sentence structures, contains some inaccuracies of spelling and can be untidy. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of religions by the end of Year 9 and know how religion influences people's behaviour and attitudes. The ability to evaluate religious ideas and to develop spiritual awareness and self-knowledge has also begun by this stage. Students can articulate their beliefs and give reasons for them, for example about reincarnation, and can recall aspects of their experience and relate them to a range of other religious ideas.

215 Progress is good throughout Key Stage 3. By Year 9 written work has increased in detail and in length. Students with special educational needs and lower attaining students acquire basic knowledge securely but their understanding and ability to evaluate ideas develops more slowly. Overall, knowledge about religion and understanding of its significance is developed more quickly by students than is the ability to evaluate and appreciate it for themselves. Higher attaining students progress rapidly with stimulating teaching, but the progress of some lower attaining pupils is affected by their short concentration spans.

216 The standards achieved by all students by the end of Key Stage 4 are somewhat below those expected within the locally agreed Syllabus, as they have less opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of explicitly religious ideas in this key stage. Students write well on the topics covered and show creativity and the ability to argue a case in their tasks and assignments. In class, students use investigation techniques well and are able to assemble evidence in the context of a group discussion. They understand, for example, the issues raised by, and the values underlying, a case of murder and can question the 'witnesses' perceptively during a role-play. The results of the increasing number of students opting to follow a GCSE course in the subject are very good, steadily improving and well above national averages. The quality of written work completed during the course is high, reflecting detailed knowledge of the religions being studied in depth and understanding of the effects of religion on believers and adherents. In class, students reflect good knowledge and understanding of the main tenets of either Buddhism or Islam including the use of the original language to describe names and ideas. Speaking and listening are well developed and students read clearly, fluently and accurately. Discussion skills are developing and students can argue a point of view with success, for example about the role of women in Islam.

217 The progress of all pupils in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, although knowledge of religions is developed less effectively at this stage due to the selective nature of the modular curriculum followed. Progress in the ability to evaluate the issues underlying ethical questions such as, for example, animal rights and capital punishment and to reflect upon their own experience is evident at this stage. Good progress is made in collaborative working and expressing ideas, for example, through role play. The progress of those students taking the GCSE course is good. Students make good use of the opportunity for in depth study of a religion and extend their knowledge and understanding rapidly, for example through their understanding of concepts like 'Zen' and 'Haiku' in Buddhism. Those studying Islam are increasingly able to draw upon their own backgrounds to evaluate a religious tradition critically.

218 Overall, the students' response to the subject is good. They show interest in the topics being studied, have good attitudes to learning, respond well in question and answer sessions and can sustain concentration well throughout the lesson. This is particularly a characteristic of GCSE lessons in Key Stage 4 where students engage enthusiastically with new ideas and concepts and enjoy the need for lateral thinking and solving puzzles. They are enthusiastic about reading aloud and working together in groups. In general studies classes, students listen well and participate enthusiastically in individual discussion, group work and role play but some groups exhibit relatively low levels of self-discipline in discussion which need firm control by the teacher. There are also very good examples of response in Key Stage 3. Students respond well to unusual classroom experience and, for example, in a lesson using a guided fantasy, provided enthusiastic feedback on their experience and recorded it with sensitivity and good levels of perception. In a lesson on the Hindu gods, lower attaining students listened attentively to the stories and then worked very effectively together to produce mimes of a story which were enacted in front of the class. In a minority of lessons, standards of behaviour slip which reduces the effectiveness of learning for the whole group. Students show initiative and take responsibility when invited to do so, but some lessons contain few opportunities for initiative and independent learning.

219 The quality of teaching overall is a strength of the subject. Nearly all the teaching is satisfactory or better and nearly half is good, very good or excellent. The strengths observed in teaching begin with high levels of knowledge and understanding of the material being studied on the part of the teacher and high expectations of students' participation in the lesson, behaviour and achievement. Planning for the subject is also of a high order and this is translated well into planning for individual lessons. A good range of methods and organisational strategies are successfully deployed, including class discussion, group work, role play and mime. The best teacher presentations are highly skilled and, linked to skilled management of the students, these result in a positive climate for learning in the classroom. Time is well used, with brisk pace and delivery, and good awareness of the length of lessons. Students' work is well marked with useful comments to help students improve their work. Homework is used to reinforce and extend learning and is well integrated with the work in lessons. Where teaching is weaker, there are lower expectations of the students, planning does not identify precise enough learning objectives and the management of students is less effective.

220 The curriculum for religious education in Key Stage 3 allows for the development of knowledge and understanding of Christianity and of several other world religions as well as for personal reflection and evaluation of religious ideas and for the development of students' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. It is broadly matched to the local Agreed Syllabus. In Key Stage 4, religious education for all students is incorporated into a modular course of general studies, but the content selected and the time given to religious education is barely adequate to meet the objectives of the Agreed Syllabus. The very good quality of leadership and co-ordination of the subject significantly contributes to the quality of the provision and the standards achieved.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

221 During the inspection, the team of thirteen inspectors spent over 168 hours observing lessons, talking to pupils and looking at their work. Inspectors attended 24 registration sessions, covering each year group, and joined pupils and staff in assemblies. A range of extra-curricular activities was observed, as was a range of meetings of staff.

222 Before and during the inspection, school documentation, including budget information, a range of policies and the school development plan, was reviewed. Extensive discussions took place between inspectors and all members of staff holding posts of responsibility in the school. Several governors were also interviewed during the inspection.

223 Inspectors looked at the work of pupils and talked with them, both during observation of lessons and in structured discussion groups. The views of pupils were sought on a range of aspects of school life, including the progress they felt they were making, their developing skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology and how they were helped to improve their work.

224 The views of parents were sought, both through the use of a questionnaire and in a meeting before the start of the inspection week.

· **DATA AND INDICATORS**

· **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
1999 - 2000	1078	30	188	206

· **Teachers and classes**

· **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	60.24
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.9

· **Education support staff (Y7 - Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	17
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	416
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79.2%
Average teaching group size:	KS3 23
	KS4 22

· **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998-1999
	£
Total Income	2,100,791
Total Expenditure	2,072,752
Expenditure per pupil	2,006
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,169
Balance carried forward to next year	43,402

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1078
 Number of questionnaires returned: 118

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	18	70	5	7	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	35	52	13	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	13	41	41	5	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	23	71	3	3	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	38	52	3	7	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	32	58	7	3	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	60	14	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	22	69	3	4	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	19	67	14	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14	66	17	3	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	22	63	10	5	0

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents were concerned about the possible effects on standards of the proposed expansion of the college. At this stage in the proposed development there is no evidence to support these concerns.