

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Leasowes Community College**

Halesowen

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103861

Headteacher: Mr John Howells

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights  
3268

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2000

Inspection number: 185928

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kent Road Halesowen West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs G Withers
Date of previous inspection:	30 <sup>th</sup> October 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr G Knights	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school and Key Issues for action
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
Ms M Manning	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Mr J Manning	Team inspector	English	Qualities and range of opportunities for learning
			Community Education
Mr K Holmes	Team inspector	Science	
Mr M McGregor	Team inspector	Art	
		Information Technology	
Mr G McGinn	Team inspector	History	
Mr D Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr R Battey	Team inspector	Physical Education	
		Special Educational Needs	
		EAL	
Ms R Humphries	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Ms S Stanley	Team inspector	Religious Education	
Ms H Feasey	Team inspector	Geography	
Mr P Tidmarsh	Team inspector	Music	
Mr M Lafford	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
Mr A Sinha	Team inspector	Urdu	EMAG

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Leasowes is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 16 years situated in Dudley LEA and in the town of Halesowen. Around seven tenths of students come from the local area, many of the remainder coming from the western side of Birmingham. Students transfer to the college from around 30 schools, though most come from six schools close to the college. The college is over-subscribed.

The college has 1182 students on roll, making it above average in size when compared with comprehensive schools nationally. Around 12 per cent of students have English as an additional language which is high when compared nationally. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at around 15 per cent, is close to the national average.

The attainment of students on entry to the college in recent years has been below the national average, with fewer than average numbers of higher attaining students. The pattern of reading ages of students entering the college over recent years has shown a steady decline and in 1999 over a quarter of students had a reading age two or more years below their chronological age. Many year groups in the college have significantly more boys than girls. Currently there are 12 students with statements of special educational needs and a further 212 are on the special educational needs register. The number of students with statements is below the national average, with a broadly average number on the register of special educational needs.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Leasowes Community College offers its students a good education. Students make good progress in their learning as a result of consistently good teaching and many achieve standards above the national average by the time they leave the school. The college gives good value for money. Overall, the college has many more strengths than weaknesses.

#### **What the school does well**

- The principal, staff and governors share a clear vision, which creates a positive ethos in an innovative college and helps ensure high staff morale.
- Consistently good teaching enables most students to make good progress in their learning.
- Students are helped to achieve high standards when compared with students in similar schools.
- Effective provision ensures that students with special educational needs, English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress.
- Very good relationships in the college help to create conditions in which students are able to learn successfully.
- Students respond very well to opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility and this helps their personal development.
- The college provides a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities, enabling students to become involved in activities beyond daily lesson.
- Induction arrangements for newly appointed staff help them to settle quickly and make a positive contribution to the college's work.
- The flexible learning day (during which students work for a full day in one subject area) makes a very good contribution to extending the range and depth of students' learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- The college has many informal systems in place to monitor developments and progress but

currently these lack sufficient rigour to ensure that systems and processes are consistently implemented in order to bring about even better standards.

- Procedures for reporting and supporting students' attainment are not sufficiently well developed to ensure that both parents and students know what needs to be done to improve.
- The college does not meet the statutory requirements:
  - To provide opportunities for all students to follow religious education and design and technology courses in Key Stage 4;
  - To enable students throughout the college to study and use all aspects of information technology;
  - To provide for students to have a daily act of collective worship.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made steady improvement since the previous inspection. Whilst overall results have remained the same, the underlying trend has been one of students entering the college with lower levels of prior attainment. The quality of teaching has also improved. The college has made some progress on the areas for action identified in the previous report. Some work has been started to address the needs of higher attaining students, but this has had limited effect so far. Progress has been made on monitoring the policies for assessment and homework and both policies have been reviewed. Better progress has been made on matching work to students' differing abilities. There is now more consistency in reporting to parents, but reports are not yet sufficiently focused on subject-specific attainment issues. There has been a considerable improvement in provision for the personal and social education course, though work remains to be done to ensure that this course is effective for students in Year 8. Some work has been undertaken to ensure a better focus for tutor time, but mechanisms for ensuring consistency are not in place. The college has not addressed the need to ensure that all students have a daily act of collective worship. Nor is there a course in religious education for all students in Key Stage 4, which is also a statutory requirement. All health and safety issues identified in the previous report have been addressed.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in national tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3 tests	C	C	C	C	very high A*
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Results in national tests for 14 year olds have been consistently close to the average overall, though above average in English, especially when compared with results for similar schools. In science results in 1999 were close to the national average, having been below average in the previous year. In mathematics results have stayed close to the national average, though in both mathematics and science the proportion of students achieving Level 6 or above is below the national average. In English the proportion reaching this level was just above the national average in 1999. Girls achieve better than boys in English at the end of Key Stage 3, while there is little difference between boys and girls in science and mathematics.

GCSE results, especially when considering the proportion of students gaining five or more higher (A\* to C) grades, have remained close to the national average for the past three years. This, however, masks a slow but steady improvement when prior attainment of students on entry to the college is taken into account. Girls perform better than boys, but in most subjects this is similar to girls nationally. The number of students gaining five or more A\* to G grades is above average when compared with all schools and well above average when compared with similar schools. The college enters almost all its students for at least one GCSE examination and very high numbers achieve at least one A\* to G grade.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have positive attitudes to college work and life and enjoy being there. Students are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunities provided by the flexible day programme.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	There is a good standard of behaviour, both in classrooms and around the college. Students mix well and relationships are good, both among students and between students and teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Students respond well when opportunities are provided to take responsibility and to work together.
Attendance	Attendance is close to the national average and students arrive punctually. Unauthorised absence is low.

The college has worked hard to create a positive atmosphere and to foster student independence and involvement in learning. Students confidently work together throughout the college.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

Overall, teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching in both key stages is at least good in three fifths of lessons and very good in around one lesson in six. It is unsatisfactory in only one lesson in 20. In English, mathematics and science teaching is almost always satisfactory or better and is good in around half of all lessons. It is better at Key Stage 3 in science and at Key Stage 4 in mathematics. Good work is being done to improve students' literacy skills, especially reading. Teachers plan their lessons well and choose a broad range of activities, especially in the flexible day programme. The expectations of what higher attaining students can achieve are not consistently high enough and many teachers do not make effective use of on-going assessment.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Curriculum provision in Key Stage 3 is good, students having a broad and balanced programme of study. At Key Stage 4 curriculum provision is unsatisfactory overall, because the college does not



	provide courses in design and technology, religious education and some aspects of information technology for all students. The college provides a wide range of out of school activities for students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision is made for these students. Their needs are identified and teaching programmes take account of these. Provision for students of very high ability is not as well developed in the college.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for these students is good, enabling them to make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Students have good opportunities to develop independence in a supportive community. Provision for students' moral, social and cultural education is good and for spiritual development is satisfactory. More could be done to provide students with opportunities for reflection, both in assemblies and in lessons across the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The college cares well for its students. Arrangements for child protection are good, as are procedures for monitoring attendance. Some health and safety matters, particularly relating to the condition of floors and stairways, are not addressed. Arrangements for the assessment of students' work and progress have been improved but are not yet sharply focused on identifying for teachers and students what specific aspects of each subject need to be worked on.

Curriculum provision which is broad and balanced overall is significantly enhanced by the work of the flexible day, but the college fails to meet a significant range of statutory requirements for the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The principal and staff share a clear vision for the college. Long term planning is securely focused around clear aims. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil all statutory duties. They are involved in many aspects of college life and are well informed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is under-developed. The implementation of policies is not regularly and systematically monitored. Regular review of work in the college is not sufficiently rigorous, nor linked to criteria related to improvement in students' performance.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. The development of learning centres across the college is a strength.

The management of the college has many good features, including the encouragement to be innovative. Lack of rigour in evaluation of work remains a relative weakness. The college has adequate staff overall, though there are shortages of some technician support. Accommodation is adequate, as are most resources. The library, though developing fast, is still under-stocked for it to be fully effective in supporting students' learning. The college is making good progress in applying the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Eleven parents attended a meeting with the registered inspector and 148 questionnaires were returned.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students like college work and life.</li><li>• Students make good progress in their learning.</li><li>• Students behave well.</li><li>• Parents are well informed about their children's progress.</li><li>• Teaching is good, with high expectations of what students will achieve.</li><li>• The college deals effectively with parental questions or concerns.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better provision of homework tasks.</li><li>• About one quarter of parents responding wanted better information about their children's progress.</li><li>• Closer working with parents.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with most of parents' views. Students do behave well and most make good progress. Teaching is consistently good but the expectations of the higher attaining students are not sufficiently high in some subjects. The college does deal well with parental questions and concerns but does not consistently work closely with parents. Parents receive regular reports on their students' work but these reports lack sufficient information about students' attainment. The arrangements for setting homework in the college are generally satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. In recent years the attainment of students on entry to the college has been below average. For students entering the college in 1999 the Key Stage 2 results in English, mathematics and science were just below the national average with a significantly lower number of students gaining Level 5 than nationally. The reading ages of these students were below average. Over three fifths of students had a reading age below their actual age and about a quarter had a reading age two years or more below their actual age. This reflects a trend over the past few years of progressively lower reading ages of students on entry to the college.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3 students in the college attain results which are broadly average when compared with all schools and those serving students from similar backgrounds. In 1999 students' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average in English and in line with the national average in mathematics and science. The proportion reaching Level 6 or above was above average in English but just below average in mathematics and science. In English and science this represents an improvement on results in 1998. Attainment in lessons throughout Key Stage 3 suggests that students currently in the college will maintain or improve on these results in the next three years. Girls achieve higher standards than boys in English at Key Stage 3, while there is little difference between girls and boys in science and mathematics.
3. In most other subjects students are attaining levels which are broadly in line with national expectations. This is true in design and technology, information technology, art and music, while attainment is above average in physical education. Teacher assessments in 1999 indicated that students were then attaining below average in geography and modern foreign languages and well below average in history. Attainment in history of students currently in Key Stage 3 is better than this and close to national expectations, while attainment in geography remains below national expectations. The attainment of students currently in Key Stage 3 in modern foreign languages is in line with national expectations, though higher attaining students do not reach the higher levels in French. Attainment of students in religious education is in line with expectations for their age in the locally Agreed Syllabus. In design and technology and history girls perform better than boys, though the performance of girls has declined more than that of boys in recent years.
4. At the end of Key Stage 4 students achieve results which are broadly in line with the national average. In 1999 the proportion of students gaining five or more higher (A\* to C) grade passes was in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. This maintains a pattern of attainment over the past three years, but actually represents an overall improvement in performance during that time. This is because over that time the prior attainment of students in each year group on entry to the college became progressively lower and the proportion of boys to girls in each year group increased. The number of students gaining five or more A\* to G grades was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools, while the number gaining one or more A\* to G grades was very high when compared with figures nationally and for similar schools. These latter comparisons are particularly creditable when taking account of the fact that the college enters most of its students for at least one GCSE examination. In 1999, for instance, almost 98 per cent of students were entered.

5. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science attainment is broadly in line with the national average, though with a lower than average number of higher grade passes in science. Attainment in these subjects is above that found in similar schools. The differences in the attainment of boys and girls are not significantly different to the differences found nationally. In other subjects attainment is well above average for students taking GCSE religious education and above average in music and food technology. Results in 1999 were below average in the systems and control and resistant materials elements of design and technology, information technology, history and geography and broadly in line with national averages in other subjects. The work of students currently in Year 11 indicates that these standards will be improved upon in design and technology, history and geography and will be maintained in other subjects. Girls tend to perform better than boys in many subjects, but only in history is this difference greater than is found nationally.
6. The pattern of standards suggests a slow but steady improvement, especially for average and lower attaining students. There has been less progress among higher attaining students despite the fact that this was highlighted as an issue for action in the previous report. This is a direct consequence of some teachers having relatively low levels of expectation of what these students can achieve. The college has set achievable targets for the coming two years based upon the known prior attainment of these groups of students and is on course to achieve them.
7. Across the curriculum attainment in aspects of literacy is broadly in line with expectations. Reading standards are especially good when compared with reading levels on entry. This is a consequence of a range of effective initiatives to improve students' reading skills. Teachers in other subjects are aware of the need to encourage students' speaking, listening and writing skills and successful work has been done to improve the standard of students' spelling.
8. Students are able to apply a range of mathematical skills in other subjects across the curriculum. They can measure and draw accurately in design and technology and can tabulate results, draw and interpret graphs in a range of subjects. There is less consistency in the college's approach to students' numeracy skills across the curriculum than there is for literacy, mainly because there currently is no whole college policy or approach to the development of these skills.
9. Students with special educational needs and those having English as an additional language make good progress in both their oral and written work. There are no significant differences between the standards achieved by students from minority ethnic backgrounds and other students in the college. Students who are gifted or talented make satisfactory progress, though some are not sufficiently challenged to ensure that they make good progress. The college has an effective programme of assessing all students in reading, spelling and non-verbal intelligence on entry, identifying their respective needs. Subject departments with good levels of assistance from support teachers and staff provide relevant tasks for special educational needs, ethnic students and for students with English as an additional language. Here students have individual education plans identifying their needs. This provision supports attainment well, which is usually as high as can be expected. This practice is just starting to be considered for gifted or talented students

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. As at the time of the previous inspection students have positive attitudes to college work and life and enjoy being there. Behaviour in almost all lessons is good. It is

often very good, particularly with the younger students. In all year groups students are enthusiastic about their work and respond well to the teaching they receive. They follow teachers' instructions readily, as was seen in a Year 9 basketball lesson where they evaluated their own and others' work well. In a French lesson Year 8 students listened with intense concentration and were enthusiastic when talking about sports and pastimes. Students work well independently and sustain their concentration, as seen in a music lesson in Year 10. Occasionally the behaviour of a few boys in lessons is less good but they rarely disrupt lessons to an extent that affects other students.

11. Behaviour around college is also good and the level of exclusions for poor behaviour in college is relatively low. Parents are happy with the standard of behaviour which is achieved and the findings of the inspection team support their views. Students can be trusted to work and play together sensibly without close supervision, as is seen at lunchtime when they have open access to much of the college site. They are polite and courteous and generally show respect for each other. They also have very good relationships with adults in college. Students from different ethnic groups are well integrated and all students mix very well together in activities. Bullying is not perceived to be a problem in college and this was confirmed during the inspection.
12. A good level of interest is shown by students in activities such as those provided on the flexible day and the extra-curricular activities which take place at lunchtime and after college. They are enthusiastic in participating in the choir and bands and also, for example, in running a college banking service which helps students save for college trips. Younger students enjoy discussing environmental issues in their personal and social development lessons and willingly and responsibly go around the site checking for litter.
13. Students respond very well to opportunities to take responsibility, such as those in the Year 10 Business Enterprise group who fulfil the roles they are elected to with confidence and considerable maturity. In groups such as these they show how well they can work together. Good collaborative work was also seen in lessons such as in a Year 7 drama lesson on 'Jack and the Beanstalk' where students did a mime improvisation and also in paired work in music. Students show high levels of independence in doing research for their homework generally and in using information technology in lessons such as for English though this is less evident in some other subjects. Many students are busily occupied at lunchtime in the Curriculum Learning Centres and the Learning Development Centre. Senior students make a regular commitment to helping Year 7 students in their tutorial period by organising quizzes and listening to readers.
14. Attendance at college is satisfactory and students arrive punctually. The level of attendance is fairly constant throughout the college although occasional tutor groups in older years show poorer levels. Unauthorised absence is very low in comparison with secondary schools nationally, as it was at the time of the last inspection.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

15. The overall quality of teaching in the college is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in 19 lessons out of 20 and is good or very good in around three fifths of lessons. There is no significant difference between the quality of teaching in the two key stages, though most of the very good teaching occurs in lessons for students in Years 9 and 11. Teaching is unsatisfactory in very few lessons and mainly occurs in classes for older students.

This good teaching overall enables most students to make good progress in their learning.

16. The teaching of English and mathematics is almost always at least satisfactory and is good in just over half of lessons in English and just under half of lessons in mathematics. In other subjects teachers are aware of the need to help students develop their literacy skills and do so successfully. The teaching of numeracy in other subjects across the curriculum is less consistent, mainly because the college does not have a whole college approach to improving students' numeracy skills. The teaching of science is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons and is good in almost half of lessons. It is better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.
17. Across the curriculum teaching is never less than satisfactory in design and technology, modern foreign languages, including Urdu, music, physical education and religious education. It is particularly good in music and physical education where most teaching is good or very good. Whilst much of the teaching in art is good in over a fifth of lessons in this subject teaching is unsatisfactory, mainly because planning is not consistently effective and teachers' expectations are not always sufficiently high. In turn this slows the rate at which students acquire a range of knowledge, skills and understanding.
18. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are aware of how best to present their subject to students. This is particularly a strength in English, mathematics, information technology and religious education. All teachers are aware of the need to focus attention in their lessons on the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and the work undertaken in the English department to improve students' reading skills makes a strong contribution to enabling students to make good progress in other subjects. In almost all subjects teachers' planning is effective and is especially so in modern foreign languages and music.
19. Many teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. This is particularly true in physical education and in information technology lessons. However, in some lessons in English, science, geography, art and religious education teachers do not have sufficiently high levels of expectation of all students. This is particularly true in some lessons for higher attaining students and results in some of these students making relatively slower progress than others. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection and though some work has been done to raise the standards of more able students they are not all achieving results of which they are capable.
20. The management of students in classrooms is a strength throughout the college and is particularly so in design and technology, music, physical education and information technology. This helps students to work well and maintain interest and concentration. Similarly, in almost all subjects teachers make good use of time and resources which in turn helps maintain good pace in students' learning. Where support staff work in classrooms teachers generally make good use of this additional help, directing attention on the work of students with the greatest needs.
21. Teachers use a wide range of teaching styles to present work to students. Often this extends to providing opportunities for students to take initiative and to carry out extended pieces of work independently. This is a particularly successful aspect of teaching during the flexible day when teachers in many departments make good use of opportunities to see through an extended project or topic in one day. Students value these opportunities and make good progress in their learning. In a small number of subjects, such as science, some opportunities are missed to use the

opportunities provided to develop students' independent learning skills. Many teachers are able to build on the skills which students acquire during the extended activities of the flexible day in other lessons during the week.

22. Only in music do teachers make very good use of day to day assessment, either to guide their planning or to give students detailed information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In other subjects this is a weakness and teachers do not sufficiently link their assessment in lessons to the objectives for the teaching and learning which is taking place. Similarly, the quality of marking, though usually consistent in approach, does not always guide students sufficiently clearly on what they need to do to improve their work. As a result students have a broad understanding of how well they are working, but limited detailed knowledge of their specific attainment in each aspect of the subject and little indication of what, in detail, they need to do to improve. In all subjects except art homework is used effectively to help students extend their studies beyond the classroom.
23. Most teachers, often with the assistance of support staff, modify teaching materials and teaching methods in order to provide good support for the learning of students with special educational needs, students from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language. The support for learning and teaching of gifted or talented students is less well developed. Students with special educational needs, from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language are supported very well within their classrooms by support teachers and assistants, who follow the programmes set by the subject teachers. They profitably spend their time assisting the understanding and progress of the targeted students with opportunities for small group or individual work. Appropriately modified tasks are fully and effectively used. Targets identified in the individual education plans of students with special educational needs are fully reflected in planning for the lessons of these students. Support strategies have not yet been extended to meet the needs of gifted or talented students, except for the more able students who are recognised as having special educational needs, such as dyslexia, some of whom have statements which define their needs.

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

24. Although the curricular opportunities for students are rich and varied with many good and some very good features, the college does not comply with statutory requirements in several aspects. As a result the quality of curricular provision cannot be deemed satisfactory overall.
25. In Key Stage 3 the curriculum is broad, rich and relevant. There is good provision for the arts with dance and drama available as part of a rota of subjects in the creative and technology programmes. Many subject areas such as English with its study of drama and media and the option for students to study two modern foreign languages are examples of the breadth and range of the curriculum. Information technology skills are taught in Year 7 and business education follows in Years 8 and 9. The teaching of humanities, including geography, history and religious education in Year 7, is effective. From Year 8 they are taught as separate subjects. There are currently some weaknesses in the coverage of information technology in science. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is good.
26. In Key Stage 4 students have a range of options which give them breadth and variety but they do not all study design and technology, religious education and every element of information technology. Some students choose to study Urdu,

psychology, physical education, dance, drama or business education in this key stage and these subjects add to the good overall range of provision. Vocational elements are offered through business education and the work experience programme, which all students undertake for two weeks in Year 11. There are good practical aspects planned in the flexible day curriculum which bring students into contact with the community and industry. These encounters prepare them well for life beyond college. The lack of balance, however, caused by the college's non-compliance with statutory requirements in religious education, design and technology and certain aspects of information technology means that provision is unsatisfactory overall in Key Stage 4. The last inspection noted the lack of provision in Key Stage 4 of religious education for all students and this has still not been implemented.

27. The flexible day each Friday is an imaginative and very successful feature of the college's curricular provision. Students are able to develop detailed work in all subject areas over a longer period of time than normal. They have opportunities to build on and develop a wide range of skills and processes, applying them to challenging situations which successfully extend their understanding. These days are well planned and give students the opportunity to develop independent research skills, which most of them use to the full. The flexible programme is rightly popular with parents and is identified by almost all students as a very helpful part of their education.
28. The college has introduced a good literacy strategy based on close co-operation with its contributory primary schools. It is well managed and is starting to show positive effects across the curriculum, especially in the improvement in reading. There is as yet no formal policy for numeracy in the college, although work in the mathematics department to raise the profile of numeracy is being supported by some other subjects, notably design and technology, information technology, history, science and occasionally in geography. The work undertaken to raise numeracy standards is satisfactory.
29. There have been improvements in the programmes for personal and social development since the last inspection and they are now at least satisfactory and in some aspects good. There are separate personal and social development lessons in Year 7 and Year 9 and in Year 8 a series of units are studied during the flexible day. All students in Key Stage 3 have the opportunity to study elements of citizenship, with good involvement from outside agencies. The college involves a trained counsellor to support its work on anti-bullying strategies in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 the design for living course is planned to incorporate health and sex education and careers education and guidance. These are successfully covered. Careers education and guidance is taught from Year 9 when students look at decision making prior to choosing their options. The college is supported by a careers agency and uses information technology programmes to provide independent advice. All students are encouraged to find their own work placement in Year 11 and most are successful in doing so. Parents are pleased with the work that the college does to prepare students for the world of work. Careers education and guidance is good.
30. The college has introduced a more formally organised programme for afternoon tutor periods since the last inspection. This has some good aspects, such as the review of homework and record of achievement discussions. In some tutor groups there are lively quizzes and active consolidation of students' learning. This is not the universal picture, however, and the session is still often ineffectively taught, partly because there is insufficient monitoring of the teaching of the tutor period.



31. The opportunities that are offered to students outside the college day are very good and are well used. There is good extra curricular provision in a wide range of sporting activities. Students enthusiastically support the many musical practices and events, including the annual show. There are dance, drama, science and other clubs. Students attend early and leave late in order to use the information technology facilities and library. There are often extensions to the Friday flexible curriculum to complete work and a mixed-age group is studying Latin on that day. Opportunities for revision and for improving performance in subjects are also offered when necessary for students.
32. The college has good links with the community which contribute to students' learning. Community facilities in the college are widely used for adult education and for local groups for sports and performing arts. The college benefits from this use by using any money raised to improve the facilities. Some departments, particularly English, actively seek links such as that with a local newspaper to extend students' learning experiences. The flexible day is a time when links are particularly well exploited, such as when a range of crafts specialists from a regional university worked with students during the inspection. The Education Business Partnership supports students' work well in business related enterprises such as running the college bank. The local colleges are in the process of being linked up in a grid system for information and communications technology and this, with good access to the Internet, is developing the potential for wider communications.
33. The college has good liaison with local colleges and also with other educational establishments world wide. Links with the main primary contributory schools are well organised and regular contact is maintained with the other schools which send students to Leasowes. Primary school teachers have provided Leasowes staff with in-service training so they have become more familiar with the primary curriculum, especially related to the literacy hour. Sound links are established with local schools and colleges to which students can transfer for post-16 study. The staff benefit from having exchange teachers from other countries and senior staff visit establishments in America, for example, on education-related projects. They apply what they have learnt to the benefit of the college. A main finding of the previous inspection was that students clearly benefited from the college's concern for the development of the whole child. This continues to be the case.
34. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. The college gives high priority for students to acquire knowledge and insights into the values and beliefs of the five main religions of this country. Assemblies provide students with opportunities for social and moral awareness but there are missed opportunities at these times for reflection. Across the curriculum students are given spiritual insights especially in music, religious education, geography, art, English and Urdu. There are missed opportunities in science and design and technology. The flexible day programme allows staff and students to experience 'stilling' exercises which sometimes take place in the woodland where students can learn to appreciate the natural world around them in an atmosphere of quiet reflection. The college does not give students the opportunity for a daily act of worship and therefore does not meet statutory requirements in this area.
35. Provision for moral development is good. Students respond well and appreciate the positive support and guidance which their teachers give them. Effective strategies enable teachers to reward students for good behaviour and encourage good moral standards.

36. Social education is good. Students have many opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example, the arrangements for induction of Year 7 which involves the help of Year 11 students. This brings substantial social benefits which help Year 7 students to adjust happily to secondary college. With encouragement from staff students raise money to support a wide range of charities. Many visits take place outside college, for example, to theatres and museums. Social development is also evident during lesson routine. For example, students collaborate very effectively especially in English and Urdu where students are taught to work responsibly and respect the work of others. The college offers a wide range of extra curricular activities particularly in physical education and music. Ten per cent of students are learning musical instruments and annual musical performances and productions are firmly established in the cultural calendar.
37. Cultural development is good. Opportunities are regularly created for students to appreciate their own cultural traditions, especially in music and English, and to understand other cultures and religions. Students are encouraged to take part in a wide range of activities supported by all subject departments. Visits to France, Spain and Germany and a Japan Day are all established features. There are additional multi-cultural opportunities across the curriculum especially in religious education, Urdu, music and dance. In mathematics students learn about the contribution that various cultures have made towards the advancement of mathematics.
38. The college's policy of inclusion for all students ensures that those with special educational needs, from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language have full access to the curriculum. Any occasional withdrawal from class is well used to support students to achieve the same levels of understanding as the rest of the class. This provision ensures all students have equal access to all areas of the curriculum with good opportunities to succeed. Curriculum provision for these students is good overall. The curriculum is well organised to meet their identified needs. Their needs are well defined in clear individual education plans, which provide an effective means to ensure students' individual needs are well addressed whilst enabling students to have full access to the curriculum. All individual education plans are available to all staff who access their programmes using their laptop computers.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

39. The steps the college takes to ensure students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory and this finding supports the views of parents. The arrangements the college makes for child protection and for the day-to-day care of students are good and staff are well aware of the proper procedures. The nurse is on site to give help and advice and provides a well-organised link with the home if students are ill. College staff and governors regularly monitor health and safety issues on site and generally act when needs arise. However, the condition of some floor coverings in areas such as ceramics is unsatisfactory. So too are some carpeted areas, including staircases, and the tiling in changing rooms.
40. The college has good procedures for monitoring and promoting students' attendance and has the good support of an educational social worker who is based at the college. Communication with the home about attendance is good and this results in a low level of unauthorised absence. The procedures which the college has for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating bullying and racism are less clear as the documents describe general principles but not how staff should put these into practice. This results in inconsistencies between departments in how students are disciplined, with some confusion about targets or time limits set for

students when “on report”, for example. In practice the college has a tutorial system which supports students well, particularly through review and guidance sessions where students are seen individually. All have appropriate opportunities to see their tutors according to their needs. A specific group of Year 10 Asian boys receive mentoring to give them more confidence and help them to improve their results. The college also has the benefit of having two counsellors who work with individuals or groups and one worked last year with Year 8 students on the issue of bullying.

41. The previous inspection report identified the need to monitor policies for assessing student’s progress and to ensure that these policies were fully interpreted into practice. The college has developed a common assessment, recording and reporting policy, which most departments follow for marking and recording student’s class and homework. However, the information gained is not well used in all subject areas to identify clearly the student’s strengths and weaknesses nor to point out areas for improvement.
42. Where marking is good students can identify their strengths and weaknesses and teachers and students are able to set realistic targets to help raise their standard of achievement. Good practice was observed in geography at both key stages and in physical education. Academic monitoring is helped by team teaching in the flexible learning days. Students understand the college marking system for achievement and effort but are not always aware of their specific attainment in each subject. Students’ skills are assessed against college guidelines effectively and clearly in information technology, but do not relate to National Curriculum criteria. Some subjects, for example art and music, are currently updating their procedures for recording and assessing student’s progress against clear criteria. Some departments have developed thorough assessment procedures, for example religious education. Assessment information is having an effect on teachers’ planning, for example, in design technology where the delivery of the National Curriculum is carefully mapped and appropriate activities are devised to be assessed against National Curriculum criteria.
43. Day to day assessments of lessons are satisfactory when students’ work is marked regularly and when students are given clear feedback which identifies their strengths and weaknesses and targets areas for improvement, for example, in history and mathematics. The recent introduction of laptops for all staff has meant that they can record assessment data and quickly access required information. National test scores from Key Stage 2 and 3, reading scores, other test data, classwork, end of module and examination results are all stored. Some departments have used this information to predict grades at Key Stage 4, for example, design and technology.
44. Targets for improvement at Key Stage 4 are recorded, for example in information technology, but several departments do not record this information formally. The review and guidance system in the college is currently effective in monitoring pastoral matters, but there is not a similarly successful system to monitor academic progress. However, in Year 11 borderline students and those under-achieving are being tutored in an effort to raise their grades.
45. Self-assessment is successful in physical education, art, modern foreign languages and music. It is used extensively in compiling students’ records of achievement. Students from Year 7 to 11 have access to assessment data, which relates to their developing records of achievement. Procedures for the identification and assessment of students with special educational needs are used regularly for reviews and targets are adjusted accordingly. The college records and reports the results of minority ethnic students and the geography department monitors the success of

these students and are also targeting the project work of Key Stage 4 boys in an effort to raise their standards. Students who have English as an alternative language are being monitored effectively to identify their specific needs.

46. Several departments do not use the recorded data effectively to monitor and set realistic targets to improve students' attainment. The procedures for reporting to parents often lack constructive comments on strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. The annual reports do comment on attitude and record grades for attainment and effort and give information on what has been studied. The interim reports in Years 7 and 8 give grades but no comments, though the publication of these is followed up with opportunities for parents to come to the college to discuss them with teachers. Although a college policy for assessment is in place and students' books are regularly checked by senior staff, thorough monitoring and evaluation of its effects on raising standards are not systematically undertaken.
47. All students are assessed on entry to the college by the learning development department for reading, spelling and non-verbal intelligence and through close liaison and visits to all contributory primary colleges. This ensures that students with special educational needs or requiring additional help are quickly identified. Further effective assessments are carried out with the assistance of support services for students for whom English is an additional language. Individual education plans are drawn up for all these students. These are well reviewed by the college at least every six months, involving parents, all affected teachers and providers of support, both within and outside the college.
48. The college duly completes regular reviews of statements of special educational needs and fully meets its statutory requirements. It very successfully involves parents, teachers and support staff working in the college in all its reviews at all stages of the Code of Practice. All its reviews are up to date and clearly identify the date of the next review and the needs of the students. The information it obtains from these reviews is well used to plan the further input and provision for all students who have individual education plans. This includes students for whom English is an additional language and students with special educational needs.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

49. Parents' views on the college are positive in some respects such as how the staff co-operate with them to sort out concerns. A significant number of parents are less happy about the extent to which the college actively involves them in college life and also about how it informs them about students' progress. The findings of the inspection team support these views.
50. The information sent out by the college is satisfactory. Documentary information such as newsletters are well written and sent out regularly and satisfactory opportunities are provided for parents to talk to teachers and tutors about their children's progress. Students' reports to parents tell parents much more about the effort that their children are making than about their specific achievements and progress in each subject. This means that parents do not necessarily have the information necessary to help their children, particularly if they do not attend consultation meetings. Sixteen per cent of parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Parents of students with special educational needs are, however, well involved with their reviews. The liaison between home and college for Asian families is very supportive, including home visits and help with translation.

51. The college is not sufficiently pro-active in encouraging parents to work in partnership with them and the positive involvement of parents noted at the time of the last inspection is less evident now. Although parents have been consulted extensively about the home/college agreement, some senior staff in the college are concerned that since it is not binding it will be of limited value. Whilst arrangements are made to inform parents about some aspects of curriculum provision, such as the flexible day, overall consultation of parents is limited. The number of parents attending meetings to discuss reports is relatively low, although college staff perceive them to be good. Parental support for concerts and activities is good and parents have provided financial support for the development of the steel band. However, some parents regret the lack of any association or parent/teacher group which would enable them to feel more actively involved in the life and work of the college.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

52. The principal, staff and governors all share a clear vision for the college, set out in its motto *Learning to Achieve Together*. Throughout the college there is a shared commitment to improvement. The principal, well supported by his deputies, provides sound leadership overall, his main strength being his encouragement to staff to work together in order to help students achieve good standards of work. In turn, heads of department and other managers in the college work hard to ensure that their teams of staff all feel that they can play a full part in college development and improvement. They play an active part in the management of the college through a programme of committees and task groups. Staff are encouraged to be innovative. This is best illustrated in the establishment and development of the flexible day. This provides an imaginative approach to broadening the range of learning experiences provided for students and helps them develop and consolidate a wide range of skills. The success of this initiative is particularly a result of the sharing of responsibilities in a well-structured way among the members of the senior management team.
53. A detailed development plan with clear long term objectives guides the work of the college. This document, revised and extended each year, is based on a set of clear objectives which are understood and agreed by all staff and members of the governing body. The objectives of the college focus first on raising standards and recognise the importance of developing each student as an individual learner. Initially drafted by members of the senior management team it is reviewed and developed by the governing body and also by staff, who contribute to detailed subject development plans. Each aspect of the plan is set out in detail with time and cost implications noted. Success criteria are included, but there is no clear, systematic and structured guidance for evaluating the impact of activities defined in the plan on students' learning and development.
54. The aims of the college are set out clearly in the college prospectus. They establish the principle of equality of access and opportunity for all students and this aim is lived out in practice in almost all the work of the college. Similarly the college is very successful in its aim of promoting and developing good relationships.
55. The governing body is active, fulfilling all its statutory duties. An effective committee structure ensures that governors play a full part in the life and work of the college. The principal, deputy heads and the chair of the governing body work well together and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. Governors help to revise and modify the college development plan and are fully involved in setting and monitoring the college budget. There are effective

systems in place to ensure that the budget planning process takes account of priorities within the development plan.

56. Curriculum management is generally good, especially in the strategies for ensuring effective coherence between the learning programmes offered as part of the flexible day and the rest of the week. Weaknesses occur in the failure to ensure that the college fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in information technology throughout the college and in design and technology and religious education in Key Stage 4. Members of the senior management team are linked to departments, but the levels of accountability within these links are not sufficiently well developed, particularly in terms of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of developments. Heads of department are becoming increasingly responsible for many aspects of the management of their subjects, but are not yet fully involved in reviewing the quality of work. College staff acknowledge that there is no comprehensive and detailed system for the review of teaching quality to ensure that improvements in this aspect of the college's work are consistently maintained and extended.
57. Management of the provision for students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language is very effective. The head of the Learning Development Centre, who is the college's special educational needs co-ordinator, fosters a very effective team approach amongst staff which supports the good levels of provision for identified students well. Specific grants such as funding for special educational needs and from the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant are prudently and well used. Staff working with students who have special educational needs are well qualified and experienced, as are most staff working with those for whom English is an additional language. The college ensures that these staff receive necessary and relevant training. The college has insufficient classroom support staff and has identified the requirement to extend this aspect of provision in order to support the increasing number of students it has identified as having special educational needs. It has not yet monitored the deployment of support staff for English as an additional language and for ethnic students to determine that it is getting best value for money from their services. There are instances where some students have now a sufficient command of English and some of their support could be more effectively used elsewhere.
58. The college has a sufficient number of well trained staff and most of these have the experience and expertise to teach the broad curriculum that is offered to the students. The few classroom and other support staff provide valuable help to teachers and students. There is insufficient support for the teaching of food technology and there is no support for the teachers of the other technology disciplines. There is, however, good support provided for the students personal welfare and development. The college has two counsellors, a nurse and also an educational social worker on site, all of whom make a positive contribution to students' welfare.
59. The college is committed to staff development and has had this recognised through its status as an Investor In People. A system of review and development is in place which allows the training needs of staff to be identified. This is supported by an adequate allocation of funds from the college budget. The college analyses the cost effectiveness of staff training but does not have a system which is rigorous enough to evaluate the impact that it has on the quality of teaching and learning. The college has successfully used ideas from abroad to look for innovative ideas and examples of good practice. An induction programme for both teaching and support staff is very good.

60. The college accommodation is good. It enables the full range of the curriculum to be taught effectively. Provision of accommodation in some areas shared with the community is very good, such as for physical education and the theatre for performing arts. The all weather sports pitch in particular is a valuable facility for organised games and for leisure activities. The information and communications area in the mathematics department is potentially a very good teaching environment and the English curriculum learning centre is already functioning well. The learning development centre and library provide useful spaces for students to work quietly. Many of the buildings are suffering from wear and tear, particularly to the floors, and three of the temporary classrooms are showing signs of age. Nevertheless, the whole site is kept in a good state of cleanliness.
61. Overall, there are sufficient resources to support learning in most subjects. There is an annual allocation of funds to each department to provide basic books and equipment, but the basis on which these funds are distributed is not well understood by many heads of departments and the amount available is deemed to be barely adequate in several subjects. Additional funds are made available for specific projects based on 'wish lists' produced by departments. This system does not sufficiently involve staff to help them understand how the system works and lacks the necessary rigour in evaluation to ensure that resources are well allocated. Recent initiatives have greatly increased the range of computer facilities in the college and these are now located in the recently established learning centres in several subject areas. As staff become more confident in their use, students are being enabled to make good use of these resources to help their learning. Significant improvements have been made to library provision since the previous inspection. An attractive library is now well used. It is stocked with a reasonable range of up-to-date fiction and non-fiction books and a growing range of audio-tapes. Students make good use of the library outside lesson time. Despite the hard work and careful planning of the library staff the overall level of books is still relatively low, limiting the extent to which teachers can use the library as a learning resource for research. Students are able to use CD-ROM based information and access the internet to support their studies in all learning centres.
62. The college has clear targets set out in the development plan, which focus particularly on improving overall levels of attainment as measured by public examinations. While these targets take good account of the overall profile of the prior performance of each year-group of students, targets are not yet fully developed at individual student level. As a consequence teachers are not necessarily modifying their teaching programmes and students are not fully aware of what they are likely to achieve or what they need to do to reach their targets.
63. Significant developments have taken place in the college since the previous inspection. During this time the college has sought to keep abreast of a range of initiatives and has developed many ideas focused on creating the best environments to support student learning. A detailed set of policy documents has been developed to a common format and these are regularly reviewed. None of the policies contains details, however, of how practice in the college is to be reviewed to ensure that all aspects of policy are being fully implemented. Indeed, the informal nature of the review systems in the college generally is the major area for development in overall college management.
64. Positive steps have been taken to explore how best to provide a range of services cost-effectively. Changes to the roles and duties of premises staff, the employment of counsellors and of a nurse and entering into contracts to provide a range of

services and equipment, such as computers, in the college have all proved valuable initiatives. They have either saved money, freed teachers to spend more time engaged in work which directly relates to the classroom or ensured long-term provision of up-to-date resources for all students.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

65. In order to raise levels of attainment of all students in the college attention should be given to the following issues:
- Ensure more rigour in systems for monitoring the progress and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the college by:
    - Regularly and systematically checking that the policies and plans in place in the college are being consistently implemented (*paragraphs 53, 56 and 63*);
    - Reviewing more systematically the quality of teaching throughout the college and involving heads of department more directly in this work (*paragraphs 56, 62 and 78, 107*);
    - Extending the involvement of senior staff and governors in reviewing the cost-effectiveness of the many initiatives being undertaken in the college (*paragraphs 53 and 57*).
  - Improve the quality of written reports in order that parents have clearer and more detailed information about what their children are achieving and what specifically needs to be done to bring about improvement in each subject (*paragraphs 50, 106, 128 and 160*).
  - Ensure that the college meets all statutory requirements by:
    - Making provision for all students to follow courses in religious education and design and technology at Key Stage 4 (*paragraphs 26, 107 and 160*);
    - Providing opportunities for students to experience all aspects of the National Curriculum Orders for information technology (*paragraphs 25, 26, 94, 126 and 129*);
    - Enabling all students to have a daily act of collective worship (*paragraph 34*).
66. In addition, a range of other issues should be considered by the college. The detail of these may be found in the paragraphs of the report indicated.
- The college should become more pro-active in encouraging parents to work alongside staff in order to help students make effective progress (*paragraphs 50 and 51*).
  - Improve assessment to ensure that students have better guidance on what they need to do to improve their work (*paragraphs 22, 46, 99, 115, 122, 128, 160*).



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

180

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

58

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	18	42	35	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1182	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	171	0

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	223	0

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	139

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.3

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	115	119	234

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	70	59
	Girls	96	69	67
	Total	160	139	126
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68	59	54
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31(32)	34(31)	20(21)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	75	72
	Girls	92	73	77
	Total	161	148	149
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69(68)	64(64)	64(44)
	National	64(64)	64(63)	60(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34(29)	33(37)	21(23)
	National	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	138	92	230

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	49	131	137
	Girls	57	89	93
	Total	106	220	230
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46(47)	96(94)	100(n/a)
	National	46(44)	91(90)	96(95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37(n/a)
	National	37.8(n/a)

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

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	9
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	5
Indian	50
Pakistani	46
Bangladeshi	18
Chinese	3
White	997
Any other minority ethnic group	52

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	
Black – African heritage	0	
Black – other	0	
Indian	1	
Pakistani	4	
Bangladeshi	0	
Chinese	0	
White	33	3
Other minority ethnic groups	8	

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

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

Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	21.1

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998 – 1999
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	£
Total income	2848124
Total expenditure	2797856
Expenditure per pupil	2350
Balance brought forward from previous year	-14555
Balance carried forward to next year	35713

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1182
Number of questionnaires returned	148

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	50	1	6	2
My child is making good progress in school.	43	48	1	8	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	57	7	5	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	59	1	20	4
The teaching is good.	31	56	4	8	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	56	1	15	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	38	1	7	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	39	1	3	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	44	5	20	6
The school is well led and managed.	41	43	8	5	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	45	5	5	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	37	15	7	1

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

### **ENGLISH**

67. The attainment of many students when they arrive at the college is below the national average, although the current intake achieved levels comparable with national averages in the English tests they took at the age of 11. Over half the students have reading ages below expectations when they come to the college and a substantial proportion are well below expectations.
68. In national tests at Key Stage 3 in 1999 the proportion of students gaining Level 5 or above is in line with the national average and above the results achieved by similar schools. The proportion gaining Level 6 and above is well above similar colleges. These figures represent good progress by the students during the key stage. Over the last three years the results of boys have risen from well below to in line with the national averages. The girls have steadily improved each year and are now above the national average. The results are affected overall by the greater number of boys in most year groups because nationally boys are found to achieve lower levels in the tests.
69. GCSE results in English in 1999 were just below the national average in the proportion of students who gained A\* to C. Nearly all students gained at least a grade G, however. These results are generally better than those achieved in similar schools.
70. The grades attained at GCSE represent good improvement by the boys since their Key Stage 3 results in 1997 and satisfactory improvement by the girls. Over the last three years results in GCSE English have been fairly static. They were the same at the last inspection. However, the reading ages of the students on entry indicate a trend of slightly lower attainment. Results in English literature, where the college enters nearly all students, show similar trends. The college still has some way to go to redress the difference between the attainment of boys and girls although some improvements occur in Key Stage 4.
71. Students with special educational needs make good progress in their learning, as shown by the proportion of students who gain at least a grade G by the time they leave the college. Similarly, good progress is made by students who speak English as an additional language.
72. In lessons and in the work observed in Key Stage 3 students are attaining levels usually in line with expectations. Their speaking and listening skills are developing well and many can participate in lengthy discussions of poetry. Skilful teacher questioning in a Year 7 lesson, for example, produced interesting ideas about how to construct a haiku. In another Year 7 lesson the teacher challenged the articulate higher attaining boys and girls to develop their vocabulary in conversations around the class. This lesson also involved students with English as an additional language and their contributions were often perceptive. Other good examples of effective learning in speaking and listening were observed in Key Stage 3 and teachers provide plentiful opportunities for students to work in groups and in pairs, for example, devising telephone conversations and group poems.
73. In Key Stage 4 students continue to make good progress in speaking and listening and their attainment is often above expectations in the higher attaining classes. Year

10 students produced succinct and penetrating analyses of speeches by various orators using information technology effectively to aid their learning. In another higher attaining class the teacher sensitively encouraged bilingual students from ethnic minority backgrounds to share their knowledge of Urdu and Gujarati to help the rest of the class understand a poem about an Asian woman living in Britain. The discussion that ensued was a very powerful and enlightening learning experience. Some lower attaining groups containing demotivated students were able to show a competent understanding of literature and talked sensibly about characters from their set books. Although the English department includes useful elements of drama into all year groups, there are few formal links with the drama department. As a result some duplication of effort occurs in the teaching of Shakespeare and there is no sharing of the good assessment of speaking and listening that occurs in lessons in the drama department.

74. Students' attainment in reading is at least average in both key stages. Most make good progress and a small number make very good progress throughout the college. This includes those with special educational needs and the students who have English as an additional language. Teachers have rightly targeted reading as a key area for development. The paired-reading support for lower attaining students in Year 7 by Year 10 students is a very good initiative and the college can show evidence that most students make progress over time. The lack of books is one inhibiting factor, however, as the proportion of books per student is well below the national figure. The college is trying to improve provision and the library and learning development centres are both well managed, giving students satisfactory opportunities to do research from books and information technology.
75. Attainment in writing is in line with expectations in both key stages and the writing of higher attaining students is often very engaging. Some Year 7 students have mature writing styles and prompted by good teaching produce examples such as "*crystal tears dripped down her rosy cheeks from sapphire eyes.*" Others employed unusual metaphors like "*her Mona Lisa grin*" to give a sense of character. In Key Stage 4 students show good knowledge of poetry in their answers to literature essays, where relevant quotations are used to illustrate key points. Teachers provide a range of stimulating activities such as media analysis using information technology to research Shakespeare, practical work on 'Romeo and Juliet' and *Of Mice and Men* and writing group stories. The flexible day gives students the time to develop their ideas and to draft and sharpen their presentations. Spelling is quite accurate in some classes but there are still many students who make fairly basic errors in straight-forward vocabulary. The presentation of written work is generally satisfactory and shows that most students are aware of the needs of their varied audiences. With the exception of higher attaining students in Year 7 and in Year 10 boys write with less flair and accuracy than the girls.
76. Most students respond well to the challenges provided by most of the teaching. Some of the work in information technology is of high quality because students have shown commitment and initiative in adapting the technology to the demands of their tasks. For example, in Year 11 lower attaining students used mind-mapping techniques on the computer to research some quite difficult pre-twentieth century literature. The main weakness is the poor concentration of a minority of boys in some classes in Years 8, 9 and 10 which adversely affects their progress and attainment. In the best lessons even difficult students are channelled into hard work by imaginative teaching.
77. The quality of teaching is good overall. There is scarcely any unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is at least good in around six lessons in 10 with some lessons

having aspects of very good teaching. There is no difference between the key stages. Teachers operate well as a team and often work together in planning and teaching during the flexible day. This is a very successful part of the good curriculum on offer for students in English. The key feature of good teaching is the effective planning in most lessons which enables students to have a clear view of what is expected of them. Different work is planned for the range of students in mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3. Often work sheets and writing frames are used to support lower attaining students. This is an aspect of the teaching that has improved since the last inspection. Homework is regularly set which builds on the work of the lesson and teachers' marking is consistently sharp, helping students to see how to improve.

78. This is a well-managed and successful department which is making a positive contribution to improvements in the college. Teachers have continued the good work indicated in the last inspection. There are two areas for development which would help to raise standards even higher. These involve the introduction of more consistent challenge for lower attaining boys in those classes where they are inclined to coast and focusing on a change of pace for students of differing ability in some classes in Key Stage 3 to provide variety and extension. To achieve this the department needs to introduce more formal monitoring systems to complement the very good informal evaluations that teachers conduct together.

## **Drama**

79. Drama is taught as part of a rota of subjects in the creative and technology area in Key Stage 3. It is a relatively new option for students at Key Stage 4. In 1999 the first entry to GCSE recorded disappointing results, where the proportion gaining A\* to C was well below the national average. Students currently in Year 11 are attaining higher standards than last year. Numbers of students opting for drama have increased year by year and they now include more students with the potential for higher grades at GCSE.
80. In Key Stage 3 younger students show very positive attitudes to the subject and make good progress. Despite their relatively short experience of drama they work well collaboratively and produce imaginative improvisations, encouraged by direct teacher support. They devise some interesting stage effects to give their actions more potency and many create convincing facial expressions to convey their intentions. Students have more confidence in performing than in evaluating their performance. Older boys in this key stage show some immaturity in preparation and lack conviction in their work but the teacher has the determination to keep them involved.
81. In Key Stage 4 attainment is below the nationally expected level but some students are making good progress, especially the girls. Their written work shows a growing ability to evaluate their own work and the performances of others. Students have learned the importance of team-work and careful planning and in their longer sessions on the flexible Friday programme produce some quite well crafted scenes. Over the shorter term most lack the confidence and skills to improvise although a few show flair and creativity on stage.
82. Students have generally good attitudes to drama and appreciate the committed teaching. The good response to the drama clubs and to the regular college-wide productions are evidence of the growing involvement of young people in performing arts. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good. The strengths are in the planning and in the assessment of students' progress. This results in the teacher being able to set the sort of activities that help students to build on their prior learning



in a structured manner. As the new teachers become more experienced they are gaining a wider repertoire of effective strategies in their efforts to raise attainment.

## **MATHEMATICS**

83. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in mathematics is close to the national average. In national tests in 1999 the proportion of students reaching Level 5 or above was close to both the national average and the average for similar schools. Standards are not significantly different between boys and girls. Results over a three year period indicate a steady level of performance broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of students reaching Level 6 or above is also close to the national average. The attainment of students currently in the school is in line with the national average. Students make good progress during Years 8 and 9, but progress in Year 7 is only satisfactory. This is because teachers are not sufficiently well matching tasks to the needs of individual students in mixed ability classes during this year. Higher attaining students in Key Stage 3 demonstrate confidence in using algebraic expressions and terms to generalise patterns and all students show a confidence in using and manipulating number. In years 8 and 9 progress is best in lessons for the higher and lower attaining students where work is targeted well at students' needs.
84. Students make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4, building on their learning in Years 7 to 9. By the end of the key stage attainment is broadly in line with the national average. In 1999 the proportion of students gaining a higher (A\* to C) grade in mathematics was close to the national average, as was the proportion gaining an A\* to G grade. For the previous two years attainment in GCSE examinations had been above the national average and above the average for similar schools. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls at Key Stage 4. The attainment of students currently in Years 10 and 11 is broadly in line with the national average and these students are making satisfactory progress during this key stage. A particular strength is the high quality of coursework produced by the students. This gives them opportunities to demonstrate their ability to undertake extended problem-solving activities. Higher attaining students particularly have developed good problem solving techniques. All students show confidence when working with numbers and have an element of pride in the work that they produce.
85. Standards of numeracy for all students are good. Many opportunities to use and apply numerical skills are provided and students take these well. This represents an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection. This strong emphasis on competence with number is coupled with an encouragement toward the sensible and appropriate use of the calculator. Higher attaining students are encouraged, for example, to demonstrate with and without a calculator their ability to solve complex problems using percentages. Students with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language make good progress in their mathematics, especially where they are given additional, focused support.
86. Students' attitudes to mathematics and their behaviour in most lessons are good. At both key stages students generally show an interest in their work. Most students listen attentively, respond to questions thoughtfully and cooperate sensibly. The relationship between teachers and students is very good and has a positive impact on learning. Students take pride in the presentation of their work. Higher attaining students, particularly, show an aptitude and willingness to persevere.

87. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3 but generally better in years 8 and 9 where work is better matched to students' needs. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching overall is good. Teaching is at its best when there is not an over dependence on the use of the text book. For instance, in a Year 8 lesson for lower attaining students the teacher generated much genuine excitement through the use of an imaginative visual aid in the form of a cardboard number machine. This lesson enabled the students to practice their number skills as well as develop their ability to think deductively. All teachers show a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and all lessons are well planned with clear objectives to achieve appropriate progression from the previous lesson. For instance, in a Key Stage 4 lesson on circle theorems the teacher built upon the concepts that the students had previously learnt and then challenged them with a number of problem solving activities. The effective use of class time to support individual students is evident in many lessons and is a strength of the department. Where teaching is only satisfactory opportunities are missed to bring the students back together at the end of the lesson to review and consolidate their learning. Work is assessed regularly in line with National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, but much of this information is not shared with students, especially at Key stage 3, which limits their understanding of how well they are achieving or what they need to do to improve.
88. A strength of the work of the department is the many opportunities provided for students to use and apply mathematics. This is mainly a consequence of the innovative flexible day programme, which enables students to work uninterrupted at a problem or investigative activity over an extended period of time. A wide range of stimulating activities is offered during these sessions. For example, an orienteering module in Year 9 allows students to engage in planning a strategy, use bearings and solve numerical problems. The programme also provides opportunities for the development of information technology skills and includes a module on the history of number. The students enjoy and are motivated by this flexible day programme in mathematics. It is a key factor associated with the high quality of coursework seen. The department is effectively led and managed. There is a good team spirit and staff morale is high. Teachers plan in pairs and share their expertise but there is no formal system in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning on an ongoing basis and this slows the rate of improvement in the overall work of the department.

## **SCIENCE**

89. Standards of achievement in science in national tests and examinations are close to the national average at both key stages and the attainment of students at the college compares well with that in similar schools. There are clear upward trends in attainment at both key stages, though the achievement of higher attaining students at Key Stage 3 is somewhat depressed and boys obtain fewer higher grades at GCSE grades than do girls. Attainment in Key Stage 3 classes in college is currently in line with the national average and that in Key Stage 4 sets broadly matches expectations. Students across the range of ability show in discussions that they have a sound grasp of recent learning and are able to design and perform investigations. They progress well during lessons. For example, students in a Year 7 class had made their own indicators and were able to contrast their effectiveness with commercial products. Students in a Year 11 set could, after completing their readings, spend time evaluating the reliability of their own results against those of other groups.

Students readily use appropriate numeracy skills when solving problems in science, particularly at Key Stage 4. Students from different backgrounds are well integrated into classes in science and all make similar progress. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress mainly as a result of the effective analysis undertaken within the department to identify students for targeted assistance, especially at Key Stage 4.

90. Teaching is good overall in both key stages, though slightly better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Well planned lessons are based on the department's detailed and thorough schemes of work which support the use of a variety of teaching methods and helps ensure that work is challenging for all students. As a result learning is good overall, but better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Students enjoy learning science, usually concentrate well and take care over the presentation of their work. Where teaching is good lessons have clear objectives and effective pace, tasks are well matched to individual students' learning needs and teachers use class-management strategies that actively encourage students to think and work for themselves. Teachers make good use of the opportunities afforded by the flexible day, offering valuable opportunities for engaging students in extended work, particularly associated with undertaking scientific investigations. Less effective teaching occurs where the teacher's management of a class is not secure because, for example, instructions to students are inadequately given and followed up while students continue to talk, thus missing the point. Also, because some teaching does not foster students' independent thinking, decision making and self-reliance some students are content to rely on the teacher for direction, pace and evaluation of their work.
91. Since the last inspection achievement in Key Stage 3 lessons has improved and now is broadly in line with national expectations, though the department's analysis of national test scores indicates that rather fewer students than expected are achieving the highest levels. Skills of prediction and evaluation are now regular components of students' investigations. However, encouraging students to predict what might happen, anticipate what could go wrong and evaluate how reliable their results are, are still not routine parts of practical classwork and work remains to be done to encourage greater student independence in their learning.
92. Radical development of the schemes of work in both key stages has enabled staff to ensure coverage of all but one aspect of the National Curriculum and to have appropriate expectations of students of all levels of prior attainment. Schemes of work and support materials often indicate appropriate methodology. For instance, staff in the department have produced and use good quality self-programming modules, some of which enable higher attaining students to work with abstract and mathematical ideas such as those needed for learning about genetics or the mole. Consistency among members of staff is now enhanced by effective monitoring of short-term planning and requisitioning by the head of department. Monitoring of marking and the setting of homework by other members of the department has also led to greater consistency. As a result of this significant development work there is clear evidence of success in establishing common practice and coverage across the department and a good degree of collegiality among staff
93. A departmental assessment policy is implemented throughout the department in line with college policy and students are given helpful printed information about learning objectives, topic overviews and progress checks. However, though printed explanations say why particular grades are given, neither they nor comments on

marked work indicate to students or their parents what skill or knowledge must be developed further to improve students' scientific performance.

94. At present the department is awaiting the implementation of the planned learning centre in science which will offer a very exciting and significant enhancement of its facilities. However, the removal of Acorn machines last summer meant the temporary loss to the department of its data logging and other computer capabilities. Some staff still encourage students to use generic applications of information technology if they have access, but the department currently does not systematically provide every student with appropriate experience of the uses of information technology to support learning in science.

## **ART**

95. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Students' art skills are variable on entry to the college and are developed over the key stage through activities in both two and three dimensions. Students are introduced to a range of media and when given opportunities can make imaginative and expressive responses to subject matter. Standards are highest in painting, ceramics and information technology work. For example, in Year 9 students had used their drawing, painting and making skills to create imaginative designs for illustrated maps linked to cultures such as the Aztecs. The completed work showed care and skill in its presentation. Students, in particular the higher attaining students, develop their information technology skills through projects that make use of animation techniques, such as advertising graphics and strip cartoons. In another Year 9 class students had made well-constructed ceramic masks developed from imaginative drawings of gargoyles. Students can develop their ideas from studies of artists. For example, painting work in Year 8 was being developed in the style of Rousseau. Many students continue to have weak recording skills and often rely upon copied images rather than recording what they see from first hand observation. The knowledge and use of art vocabulary and sketchbooks to record and explore ideas is also under-developed. Learning is satisfactory overall but varies considerably from lesson to lesson and for many students is unsatisfactory.
96. Since the previous inspection standards at Key Stage 4 have remained below the national average. GCSE results for 1999, however, show a very considerable improvement over previous years, particularly the results for girls, which for the higher (A\* to C) grades were slightly above the national average for girls. Results for boys also improved for the higher grades but still remain below the national average. Many of the present Year 11 students demonstrate satisfactory drawing skills but lack the techniques and understanding to use them in developing their own imaginative work and are too reliant upon teachers for guidance. Standards are highest in ceramics where there is evidence of more expressive and imaginative work, for example, in designs for teapots which explored the theme of entrapment. Other students had explored their ideas through expressive modelling and caricatures of figures. In painting and drawing Year 10 students made good gains in their observation skills through sustained work as part of the flexible day. As a result of the increased time available they were able to make good quality, considered and accurate drawings and develop these using a range of media. Overall, students, particularly the boys, make insufficient progress with their learning over the key stage and a significant number of students show a lack of independence.
97. Attitudes to learning vary from satisfactory to good and are closely linked to the level of challenge and expectation from teachers. In most lessons at both key stages attitudes to learning are good. Students behave well try hard to improve and

relationships are constructive. When given opportunities students show initiative, use materials and resources sensibly and can achieve work of good quality. Students are able to make sustained effort and concentration, for example, during the flexible day.

98. In the best lessons teachers communicate their specialist knowledge and skills clearly and make regular use of questioning to check knowledge and understanding, which results in good responses from students. For example, in a ceramics lesson the techniques required for the next stage of working were clearly and concisely demonstrated, resulting in good concentration and motivation. Teaching is variable across the department and in many lessons presentation and content are such that students are directed rather than challenged to apply their skills to solve problems and express their ideas. As at the time of the previous inspection planning does not ensure that tasks closely match students' abilities and build upon and consolidate learning. For example, in a lesson developing appreciation of the artist Lowry the practical work gave insufficient opportunity for individual students, particularly higher attainers, to use their knowledge and art skills and resulted in very similar work from most students. The use of assessment to plan future work is not a regular feature of teachers' lesson planning and is an area for development.
99. As at the time of the previous inspection some staff have been focused on other management responsibilities beyond the department and as a result development and monitoring of art have been limited. However, the examination results in 1999 have demonstrated that the department has the capability to raise standards. Since last September the new head of department has put in place clear assessment and recording systems that also involve students in evaluating their work. These assessment procedures are yet to be used consistently across the key stages to track students' progress and give them guidance on what and how to improve. Schemes of work, particularly for Key Stage 3, do not currently provide sufficiently challenging experiences for students that progressively develop their knowledge, skills and understanding and provide them with a strong base from which they can develop more imaginative work at Key Stage 4.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. Students enter the college with levels of attainment in design and technology which are below the average for students of a similar age nationally. The attainment of the students at the end of Key Stage 3 1999 teachers' assessments was in line with the national averages. More girls than boys reached the higher Level 6. Approximately half the year group follow a design and technology course at Key Stage 4. The combined results in 1998 were significantly below national averages but in 1999 they were only slightly below national averages. Girls did better than boys in both years, with boys' attainment significantly below national averages in 1998 but only slightly below the national average in 1999. Students taking food technology did better than the national average in both years but results in systems and control and resistant materials were below the national average.
101. Attainment in lessons in Key Stage 3 is nearly always in line with national standards. Where it is below these standards lower attaining students have difficulty following worksheets and trying to visualise how to produce isometric drawings. Attainment is higher when very good stimulation materials are used. In Year 9 textiles, for example, these materials enable the students to develop a range of good ideas for their fantasy hats, waistcoats or shoes.

102. Students following design and technology courses at Key Stage 4 are keen to do well. A group of students of varying abilities in Year 10 were totally committed to producing quality coursework and these students are expected to gain one hundred per cent A\* - C grades. They come to resistant material lessons fully prepared, with examination revision questions completed and with very thorough and detailed folder work. The teacher has high expectations and has motivated the group very effectively. The quality of work in all the different areas of design technology is generally good for students of all abilities. Basic knowledge of food production is good and the focused tasks in textiles and resistant materials are helping students develop a good understanding of the types and properties of materials. The graphics course in Year 10 helps students acquire good drawing skills.
103. At both Key Stages teachers help students to understand technical terminology and extend their vocabulary. Accurate measurement is given a high priority in preparing materials and commodities and as a result quality artefacts are produced in wood, metal, plastic, textiles and food. In turn this work contributes to students' application of numeracy skills. The presentation of folder and project work is often good and sometimes very good and students with special educational needs are carefully guided and encouraged to present their work to a high standard. Some low attaining students do, however, have difficulty with drawing precise and accurate diagrams in graphics. The attainment of boys currently in the college indicates a gradual improvement in all aspects of design and technology. Where attainment is unsatisfactory specific targets for improvement have not been clearly identified.
104. Progress is nearly always good. Where progress is satisfactory students either have difficulty in understanding the task or the pace of the lesson is not sufficiently challenging. When progress is very good clear objectives are shared with the class and marking is thorough and detailed and identifies areas for improvement. Students develop good research skills and are able to analyse data effectively to produce a range of workable ideas, for example, in Year 11 food technology and textiles projects. The development of these ideas is extensive, especially among the higher attaining students who have been able to explore a variety of ideas in depth. Lower attaining students' written work at both key stages is showing improvement but they are better at making than designing. Students with special educational needs make good progress when they are well supported and encouraged to do simple tasks well. Students who have English as an alternative language are well integrated and make good progress, often adding a new cultural dimension to the lessons, especially in food and textiles.
105. Students' attitudes toward work and their general behaviour are nearly always good or very good at both key stages. Most arrive at lessons well equipped and with homework completed. They sustain high levels of concentration and, when tasks are difficult or testing, they generally show perseverance and rarely become disillusioned. Higher attaining students show good skills in independent research but lower attainers sometimes struggle to develop their idea without a great deal of teacher support. Most students work effectively individually, in pairs or in groups and generally share work and responsibilities evenly. Students respond well to the variety and depth of stimuli provided by the teachers. Their respect for equipment, other cultures and their good social interaction with other students and teachers are all very positive. Several students take responsibility for their own learning but some are happy to be guided by the class teachers.
106. The quality of teaching observed is never less than satisfactory. In three-quarters of the lessons teaching is good or better and it is very good in about one fifth of lessons. Where lessons are highly structured the teaching of basic skills is very thorough and

this enables students to progress by building on previously acquired knowledge and skills. Teachers' subject expertise is good. The co-ordinated planning of schemes of work indicate progression of skills and understanding across the key stages. Tasks are relevant and interest the students. Although there is some guidance on how to match work to the different needs of students, this guidance is not always used to stretch the higher attainers or support the lower attainers effectively. There is a good balance between designing and practical activities in most material areas. Management of the students is generally very good in most classes, but occasionally informality detracts from serious learning. The limited resources are well managed and prepared, though the lack of a wide range of resources limits the scope of activities that can be planned and delivered. In most rooms displays of good quality are used to develop students' ideas and to promote high standards. Most teachers have high expectations and their interaction is positive, especially in business education and in textiles in Year 9. Teachers generally mark work regularly and some give very helpful feedback and identify areas for improvement. However insufficient targeting for improvement is recorded and monitored. Reports record students' attainment and effort, but the comments mainly make reference to their attitude to learning rather than identifying areas of strength or weakness. Regular references are made to industrial practices in the production of materials but few visits are made to manufacturing companies.

107. Statutory requirements are not being met at Key Stage 4 because only about half the students in the year group study a course in design and technology. Overall management of the department is good. Since the last inspection the head of department has co-ordinated the teaching of the curriculum very effectively. The limited resources have been allocated fairly between the different materials areas, though the lack of technical support has affected student's learning. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has widened and textiles and graphics are now options at GCSE. The Year 9 business education course contributes positively to the developing of student's research skills and enhances basic word processing skills. Although Years 7 and 8 are taught information technology skills as part of the design and technology modular course, the use of information technology in design and technology is not yet planned in detail. Word processing and graphics are used to enhance projects and this is often developed and extended either at home or out of lesson time in college.
108. Some monitoring of teaching is effectively done by the head of department in her non-contact time, but there is no formal structure for this to take place. The training sessions during the flexible day provide good opportunities for departmental staff to share good practice. Training needs are identified and currently a concerted effort is being made to improve staff information technology skills. Schemes of work are regularly updated and the use of the flexible learning day is exploited to the full giving the students the opportunity to complete design and make activities in one session. Work done during this day is assessed and used as part of the student's record of attainment.
109. Since the last inspection safety issues have been addressed and lesson planning shows progression and now follows National Curriculum guidelines. Liaison with local industry is still under-developed. Teaching has improved in quality and there is less teacher direction and better use of a wider variety of teaching styles. The college assessment policy has been implemented and current data on students' attainment is beginning to be stored on individual teachers' laptops. Full use of this information is not yet being used to target and monitor areas for improvement in order to raise standards further.

## GEOGRAPHY

110. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. However, the proportion of students reaching higher levels of attainment has increased over the last two years and the work of students currently in Key Stage 3 confirms that although attainment is still below national expectations this improvement is being maintained. For example, skilful teaching in a Year 7 lesson enabled students with below average attainment to extend their understanding after a recent fieldwork excursion. They linked their experience in the field to a variety of map exercises and then attempted a challenging written summary of the landscapes and land use that they had seen. In a Year 8 lesson on world population growth students' learning was enhanced by carefully planned activities that maintained their interest and helped them to understand some of the complex reasons for the dramatic changes which they had identified. However, some students' attainment in Year 9 was restricted by their inability to recall and understand the use of key geographical skills, such as the use of latitude and longitude. They also had difficulty completing simple population density calculations and as a result their concentration lapsed. In a project on a new settlement, completed during the flexible day programme, all students produced a summary of information for display but only a small number of higher attaining students managed to analyse and explain their findings in extended written answers.
111. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students have acquired a variety of geographical skills and are now making rapid headway in their use of information technology to explore different regions and geographical processes such as natural hazards. Good relationships with their teachers enable students to ask for help and to answer questions confidently. Students with special educational needs receive good support during lessons, enhancing their level of achievement. No significant difference in the performance between boys and girls, or between students of differing ethnic origin, was observed.
112. At the time of the last inspection attainment in Key Stage 4 was below the national average. Since then the proportion of students gaining a higher (A\* to C) grade in GCSE examinations has fluctuated. There was a significant improvement in 1998 when results were above the national average. In 1999 results were just below the national average. Girls' results are considerably higher than those obtained by boys, reflecting national trends. In this college an unusually high proportion of boys choose to study geography so that a lower than national average level of performance might be anticipated. However, the department is working hard to improve the performance of boys, particularly in the production of their coursework. Results from this strategy are encouraging with increasingly successful use now being made of information technology to analyse, evaluate and present data. Students currently in Key Stage 4 are working at levels expected nationally. In a small group of lower attaining students in Year 10 effective use was made of appropriate images, together with a clear written summary, to ensure that all students had a good understanding of coastal processes. In a Year 11 lesson students extended their understanding of deforestation in tropical regions by following a carefully structured programme and using a variety of resources appropriate to their abilities. Higher attaining students responded particularly well to difficult questions on wider environmental issues.
113. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall, with nearly a half good or very good. A very small proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory. Where this occurs insufficient attention to students' previous knowledge and poor management of time means that tasks are not be completed successfully. An example of very good teaching was seen in a Year 9 lesson where students extended their knowledge of Japan by carefully controlled access to appropriate web sites on the Internet. Students of all



abilities derived great enjoyment from the activities they were required to do, could all identify what they had learned and were able to discuss the relative merits of different types of research. In Key Stage 4 over half the teaching is good or very good and with no unsatisfactory teaching. The most effective teaching, resulting in rapid gains in learning, was characterised by the use of challenging questions, high expectations and the establishment of a good pace. A good example of all these qualities was seen in a Year 10 lesson where the impact of population change in less developed countries was explored. This level of challenge and pace is missing from some teaching groups and here students are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners.

114. Teachers plan their lessons well and use a wide range of resources so that students of all abilities can make good progress. Care is taken to make sure that all students are aware of the aims and learning objectives of every lesson. Homework is set consistently and marked with helpful comments so that students know how to improve their work. Teachers' insistence on high standards of behaviour in the classroom and the existence of co-operative relationships between teachers and students continue to enable most to concentrate well and work without interruption. However, the long-term absence of one member of the department is seriously restricting the learning and progress of some students.
115. The head of department provides thoughtful and sensitive leadership and fosters a commitment amongst the teachers to raising the achievement of all students. Opportunities provided by the flexible day are grasped, particularly for the completion of fieldwork and coursework. Schemes of work are planned and updated in detail. Closer monitoring of the delivery and completion of each unit of work will ensure that all aspects and skills are covered as planned. More rigorous systems to assess students' attainment are now in place, particularly in Key Stage 3. Further development of these systems and their use to set individual targets shared with students will help to monitor progress more effectively in future. The department is now well placed to build upon the improvements that it has made since the last inspection.

## **HISTORY**

116. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations, as indicated by the proportion of students achieving Level 5 and above in teacher assessments in 1999. There has been a significant decline in the level of attainment over the last two years, especially in the performance of girls. Girls still do better than boys, however, with the difference being similar to that nationally. These results are partly explained by rapid staff turnover and a lack of monitoring of the teaching in Year 9. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average, as indicated by the proportion of students achieving A\*-C grades at GCSE in 1999. The proportion of those attaining A\*-G grades is in line with the national average. There has been a downward trend in the higher grades since the last inspection, although this was slightly reversed in 1999. These results were also affected by the high staff turnover, with two of the four GCSE classes having three teachers in two years. The difference between the achievement of boys and girls at the higher grades is far greater than that nationally. In 1999 girls' results were above the national average and some of the best in the college while boys' results were very well below and were some of the worst in the college. The department has begun to address this issue by changing to a syllabus with more appeal to boys, though teaching strategies more suited to promoting boys' learning and closer monitoring of their progress are not yet fully in place.

117. The overall level of attainment of students currently at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations and better than the latest teacher assessments in 1999. This is mostly attributable to the use of a wider, shared range of teaching strategies and a greater emphasis on the development of history skills. Teachers are setting higher expectations and consequently more challenging tasks, reversing a weakness at the time of the last inspection. Most students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the key characteristics of the subject and of chronology. Nearly all students can effectively select and record information from written and pictorial sources and they have sound skills of enquiry and organisation, as seen in well-researched work on the English Civil War. This includes lower attaining students and those with special educational needs, who are very effectively supported by well-prepared materials to match their needs by the department and through close liaison with learning support teachers. Most Year 8 students also have a sound understanding of causes and many higher attaining students in Year 9 produce extended writing of a high standard and with empathy in describing the conditions on slave ships. They also show good understanding of different interpretations of the Gunpowder Plot. Although middle attaining students can often express their ideas well orally in group and class discussion, their understanding of the usefulness and reliability of written sources, their skills of analysis and interpretation and the ability to write effectively at length, are less well developed.
118. The attainment of students currently at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average and better than the latest examination results. This is due to the use of more varied teaching strategies, especially to help the lower attainers, though lack of consistent and rigorous application is resulting in under-achievement in some middle attaining students. Nearly all students make notes satisfactorily from a variety of sources and can make accurate deductions from these. Students with special educational needs are given effective in-class support by the learning department and with the aid of home-produced resources. Most students have a broad understanding of change and continuity and sound skills of research and organisation. However, a secure knowledge of developments over time in the history of medicine is lacking in middle and lower attaining students. Higher attaining students produce good extended writing with accurate analysis and vivid empathy on the lives of Black women in America. They also prioritise causes successfully in examining the reasons for Roosevelt's 1932 election victory. However, these skills of source evaluation, interpretation and effective writing at length so necessary to attain the higher grades at GCSE, are less developed in middle attaining students.
119. Students' attitudes to work and behaviour are nearly always good. They are best at Key Stage 3, where in over half the lesson they are very good. Attitudes to work are never less than satisfactory. Students settle quickly to tasks and listen well to the teacher. The regular use of lively, well-controlled group work and role plays has also encouraged them to listen well to each other, to respect each other's views and to work well collaboratively. This is a strength in the students' attitude to work and clearly reflects their willingness to take responsibility and show initiative. It was best seen in a fascinating and productive discussion among Year 8 students on capital punishment, springing from an enactment of the execution of Charles 1, with students of all abilities contributing confidently. They also readily assume the responsibility of working by themselves and take research tasks seriously, as seen, for instance, in the good work produced over the Christmas holiday on the English Civil War in Year 8. Nearly all students concentrate and work with enthusiasm throughout the lesson, including those with special educational needs. The high standards expected and universally enforced by the department ensure that students behave well and show respect for the teacher. Most students take care over the presentation of their work and do their homework regularly. The active, lively and

constructive involvement that students now experience in history make it a popular subject at Key Stage 4, with the number choosing history in the current Year 10 well above the national average.

120. The quality of teaching is good or better in nearly three-quarters of the lessons. It is best at Key Stage 3 where it is good in nearly all lessons and often very good. Teaching is rarely unsatisfactory and only at Key Stage 4. This is a marked improvement on the quality of teaching previously reported. This improvement is largely due to the increased emphasis on the development of learning and history skills, prompted by effectively revised schemes of work and carefully chosen activities which involve students far more actively in the learning process. Teachers have a good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and set appropriate learning objectives which are clearly explained to the students. This good planning includes the consistent and effective matching of tasks and materials to the needs of the lower attaining students and those with special educational needs, which enables these students to make good progress in their learning. This is enhanced by the good liaison with the learning support department and the constructive use made of support staff in the classroom. Students are managed well, relations are very good and high standards of behaviour are expected and set. This creates a good working atmosphere in the classroom and leads to effective learning, especially through the active involvement of students in enquiry and lively oral work through the wide variety of teaching strategies. Consequently, the basic skills of oral communication and recording evidence are being well-developed in students of all abilities.
121. The adventurous use of the flexible day promotes active learning and the development of history skills, enhanced by outside visits to Kenilworth Castle by Year 7 and by Year 8 to the Black Country Museum, with purposeful follow-up in class. Resources are effectively used, despite book shortages at GCSE level. Information and communications technology is beginning to be used as an important resource for research, though not yet written into schemes of work. A strength of the teaching is the good pace of the lessons and the changing of activities to hold the students' interest, punctuated by sharp questioning to review understanding at the midpoint and conclusion of the lesson. Homework is regularly set and marking is done regularly and generally in a helpful way to inform students of strengths and weaknesses and to highlight areas for improvement. However, more detailed annotating of the text of Key Stage 4 work would further support the otherwise helpful concluding comments.
122. The good quality of the teaching results in good progress being made in the students' learning at both key stages, both in the work seen and over time compared with their prior attainment. Students' attainment level is below average on entry to the college but by the end of the key stages it is in line with the national average for similar colleges. The higher expectations being set by teachers for higher attaining and some middle attaining students at Key Stage 3 lead to more lessons where very good progress is made in their learning than at Key Stage 4. Indeed, on occasions, expectations are so high that middle attainers require more stepped guidance to help them to succeed. At Key Stage 4 tasks are not always sufficiently challenging to make all higher and some average attaining students think for themselves, especially in evaluating causes and sources, interpretation and in producing extended writing more independently. Further progress to even higher levels of achievement, especially at Key Stage 4, is also being hindered by the lack of well-developed assessment procedures to monitor the students performance. Although history reports are now helpful in their subject specific comments for improvement, the other area of criticism in the last inspection report, the need for better analysis of centrally recorded results to inform curriculum planning and the students of their progress, has

not been fully addressed. The setting of individual targets and close monitoring of progress at Key Stage 4 and provision of more assessment tasks in Years 7 and 8 are also not in place. These strategic developments are being hampered by the uncertainties over the role of the head of department.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

123. The college is currently in the early stages of implementing change as a result of its participation in The Dudley Grid for Learning. There is a vision of how information and communications technology has the potential to extend learning opportunities within and beyond the college. To this end the college has equipped all teachers with laptop computers and has provided initial training on the use of the college network. Students have good access to computers and the Internet across the college and there is a willingness on the part of students and many staff to use new technologies.
124. Standards at Key Stage 3 are above average for the skills of communicating information. Teacher assessment for 1999 indicates attainment broadly in line with the national expectation but above average for the local authority. The 12 week skills course which all students follow in years 7 and 8 results in good levels of independence when researching topics and presenting text and pictorial information in a variety of forms. For example, Year 7 students used publishing software to combine text and images, presenting in their own words the results of their Internet research on Pandas. They can, when presented with opportunities, apply their skills in other areas of the curriculum, for example, to draft and redraft their work in English and to present work in business education and design and technology. Students in Year 9 make use of animation software to develop and present work in art. The skills of handling and interpreting data, measuring, monitoring and controlling events are not part of the taught information technology courses at Key Stage 3. Standards in these areas are thus below average. Students have some opportunities to investigate problems using spreadsheets and Logo in mathematics and some aspects of control in design and technology, but they are not taught to use these skills with the same regularity or develop the same capability or independence as in other aspects of information technology. Students can in most cases use the college network confidently and independently, discuss and explain their use of information technology and demonstrate growing understanding of its use and application in the wider world.
125. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results for 1999 were below the national average for the higher (A\* to C) grades and have declined, particularly for girls, over the past three years. The overall results covering all grades from A\* to G have, however, been sustained at a very high level and well above the national average. Students who opt for the GCSE course are taught a full range of information technology skills that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and can apply these to their project work. They build upon their experiences from Key Stage 3 and in many cases already show good levels of independence in their use of the new college network.
126. The group studying information technology represents about half of the students in Key Stage 4 and for the remainder their experience and application of information technology, particularly to collect and interpret data, is insufficient to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study. As at Key Stage 3 skills in communicating and handling information are at appropriate levels. Students make regular use of information technology in business education and in mathematics and English but there is not yet an overview of teaching opportunities planned across the

curriculum to fully meet the needs of all students. The college has worked hard to ensure a smooth transition to the new system but in several areas, particularly measuring and control, suitable software and equipment is not yet in place to enable statutory requirements to be met.

127. Where information technology is taught in the modules at Key Stage 3, as part of the GCSE course at Key Stage 4 or in subjects across the curriculum, then teaching is predominantly good. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and communicate this clearly, which enables students to make good progress with their learning. Lessons are characterised by thorough preparation of activities that are challenging and which encourage students to develop independent attitudes to their learning. For example, as part of the flexible day students in a Year 10 information technology class were taught the basic functions of control software and given a series of control tasks to solve. A range of support materials was made available which students could consult in addition to seeking help from the teacher. With the extended time available because of the flexible day this resulted in considerable experimentation and sustained learning, resulting in a range of solutions to the problems set. In a Year 10 mathematics class lower attaining students made significant gains in their learning because the teacher had developed appropriate materials which enabled them to investigate the properties of triangles. Question and answer are often used effectively by teachers to check understanding and reinforce key points, which also helps students learn and improves the pace of lessons. On occasions at Key Stage 4 pressure to complete tasks means that opportunities are missed to evaluate and consolidate learning. Students are encouraged to make selective use of the Internet for their research, for example in language lessons, and many subject areas encourage the use of information technology to draft and present work.
128. Assessment for the GCSE course is clear, carried out to examination criteria and is available on the college network. For other students at both key stages, assessment systems do not yet ensure that information technology experiences are recorded and that sufficient information is provided for parents and students about progress against the national expectations.
129. Since the last inspection resources for information technology have improved considerably, with the new college network providing access for students and staff. The head of department and those teaching information technology have made good progress in developing student use of this new system in its first term. The new initiatives, involving both software and equipment acquisition have enabled much good work to be undertaken, but planning does not currently take full account of the statutory requirement to provide regular opportunities for all students to develop their information technology capabilities.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French, German and Spanish**

130. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the proportion of students gaining grades A\* - C in a modern foreign language was roughly in line with the national average. This takes into account that almost all students in Year 11 were entered for the examination in either French, German or Spanish. Boys did not achieve as well as girls but the difference was not greater than found nationally. The percentage of students obtaining grades A\* - C has remained static over the last three years in German and Spanish. It fell considerably in French in 1997 because for the first time all students were entered for a language examination.

131. By the age of fourteen at the end of Key Stage 3 most students currently attain levels which match national expectations for their ages and abilities. However, the highest attaining students are not given the opportunity to reach the higher National Curriculum levels in French. Students in Years 8 and 9 are required to study either German or Spanish as their second foreign language and they attain expected levels. Most students can use the language to express their likes and dislikes and take part in dialogues involving food and drink, shopping and travelling. Listening skills are well developed because most teachers routinely use the language being taught for instructions and simpler explanations. Students' speaking skills are generally well developed because teachers make a lot of effort to get them to participate in oral work. The most able students in French acquire a wide vocabulary but are not able to use the past tense or write at length.
132. The highest attainers in Key Stage 4 are able to use the language they are learning to write formal and informal letters. They write accounts of holidays and trips and in doing so they demonstrate sound understanding of present, past and future tenses. Lower attaining students use vocabulary in a variety of contexts such as hobbies and pastimes, college work and shopping. They are able to identify relevant information in a simple printed or recorded text. The careful planning and dedication of the teachers ensures that most pupils make good progress. Students with special educational needs receive sound support and encouragement and also make good progress.
133. With a small number of exceptions, students have positive attitudes to language learning. They are generally enthusiastic and well motivated and are usually keen to take part in oral activities, whether as a class or in pairs or groups. Behavior is good overall but a small number of students in Key Stage 3 engage in immature behaviour with the intention of disrupting lessons. Teachers cope with these students competently. In classes where this occurs most students disassociate themselves from such activity and concentrate on the matter in hand.
134. The quality of teaching in modern languages is good. Teachers' planning provides for the coverage of all of the Attainment Targets and they use a variety of strategies to teach and reinforce new vocabulary and structures. Lessons usually move at a brisk pace so that students are kept on task and productive use is made of the available time. Teachers manage their classes well. They encourage students to take part in oral work with the result that they gain confidence. On occasions, explanations and anecdotes in English take up too much time. In Key Stage 4 teachers have high expectations of their students and set tasks which have appropriate challenge. This also applies in Key Stage 3 in listening and speaking activities, but the older, more able students are not set sufficiently challenging written work in French. Teachers usually enhance listening skills where possible through their sustained use for instructions of the language being taught.
135. The modern languages curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enriched by the provision of a second compulsory language in Years 8 and 9 and by the choice between German, Spanish and Urdu. The flexible day on Fridays allows teachers greater scope to provide wider linguistic experiences for students, including the reading and writing of poetry, as well as to contribute to their cultural development. The department is well led. There are satisfactory procedures in place for the assessment of students' attainment and National Curriculum levels are given. There is no provision for the setting of individual targets. Teaching is monitored with a view to raising standards. The department has recently acquired good computer facilities and although it is too early for any systematic use of interactive programs for language learning, students make good use of the facilities to word process their

work. Teachers have a good supply of resources, including reprographic materials and audio-visual aids but text book provision is unsatisfactory because Key Stage 4 students are not able to keep a book for their own use.

## Urdu

136. Urdu (offered as one of the second foreign languages to students in Year 8 onwards) enriches the college's overall curriculum and provides choice and equality of access to a large number of ethnic minority students. There has been a marked decline in the GCSE A to C grades in Urdu since the last inspection, however. There has also been a decline in the number of students entered for GCSE in this subject in the past two years.
137. Students' attainment in lessons is variable, with Year 9 students achieving more better standards than those in later years. Overall, students' standards in Urdu in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are below the national expectations. Almost all students in both key stages can understand basic classroom routines as well as words, phrases and short sentences in Urdu spoken at normal speed. For some, however, this needs to be repeated, even repeated at slow speed. In both key stages students' passive language skills, such as listening, reading, copying and responding to short questions, are more advanced than their active language skills, such as constructing new phrases, writing short texts or paragraphs or transforming phrases into new phrases with necessary grammatical or structural changes.
138. In Key Stage 3 students can copy words and short phrases, repeat short words and phrases and can take part in short dialogues. They can also identify words and phrases from a text or when spoken by another speaker. However, although their accent is usually satisfactory, some still show hesitation in their spoken language. Students' awareness of the cultures and institutions associated with this community language is high. Though a number attempt to speak Urdu words and sentences, relatively few attempt to maintain unaided dialogues. No evidence was seen of students using a dictionary or other resources to extend and enrich their knowledge and skills in this subject.
139. Students' familiarity with the Urdu script is developing in both key stages. Their written work is developing steadily. The extent of most students' writing is restricted usually to short phrases or to copying, however. Reading is largely limited to guided reading of words and phrases in the textbooks, though some students have also used additional reading materials. Independent language learning skills are under-developed in both key stages, though this is more noticeable in Key Stage 4. While there are some examples of good progress made, especially in Key Stage 3, progress over time is, generally, barely satisfactory.
140. Both in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students' enthusiasm for Urdu and its associated culture is noticeable, which in turn has sustained their learning and progress in the past few months despite considerable disruption to their studies due to teacher absence. Relationships between students and their teacher are very good. In a Year 9 lesson a good deal of learning took place in a simulated shopping environment with students pro-actively engaging on conversations and taking responsibility for their own learning in a collaborative manner. A few students' concentration, especially in Year 10, is sometimes short-lived, however, which causes disruption and hampers learning. Girls tend to be more on task and less disruptive. As a result, girls out-perform boys in Urdu in all the four language skills.
141. While homework is given and marked assessment and feedback do not usually form part of an integrated monitoring and evaluation strategy to nurture students'

independent language learning skills. Also, often homework is undemanding. In addition, little use is made of information technology during Urdu lessons or in their written work, which has hampered their skills for self-study and self-evaluation. Consequently, in both key stages students' progress over time has been slow and their attainment levels have suffered.

142. Urdu teaching shows considerable commitment to the subject and loyalty to students. Teaching quality is generally satisfactory. Lessons are planned and delivered consistently and a variety of activities are employed. Consistent and sustained use of the target language is a strength of the teaching. Individual students are well supported in the light of their individual needs and most students remain engaged on tasks. Usually the pace of lessons meets students' learning needs and styles. Class management is sound, creating an ethos of learning and enjoyment. Textbooks and teaching aids are appropriate. Materials used are suitable and attractive and the aims of lessons are normally clear.
143. At present the Urdu curriculum offers limited exposure to the target language not only because of the unpredictable and sometimes prolonged absences of the lone teacher but also because of the absence of any other adult Urdu speakers in the college who can extend students' oral and listening experiences.

## **MUSIC**

144. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is about average compared to the national expectation of those aged 14 and this matches standards found in similar schools. By the end of Year 9 students can compose and perform short instrumental pieces and songs with confidence and understanding. They combine melodies, chords and rhythmic patterns in imaginative and conventional musical structures. Listening skills are above average and most students can describe the music they hear in the correct technical terms.
145. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average for music. Although relatively small numbers were involved, nine of the 11 GCSE candidates in music entered in 1999 gained A\* to C grades and all of them achieved an A\* to G grade. Since the previous inspection results have improved and have been consistently well above average for the last three years. Attainment in lessons matches examination results. By the end of Key Stage 4 students perform their compositions, most of which combine melodic and harmonic features, competently and with considerable musical assurance. Students' individual performing standards cover a wide range of instrumental and vocal skills from elementary to about Grade 5 and reflect their personal musical interests and capabilities well. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
146. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are taught by experienced musicians who are skilled in adapting music to meet individual needs. The content of lessons and activities at both key stages are chosen with careful regard to what appeals to young people and students find music to be a popular subject to which they respond with considerable enthusiasm. Students are frequently exposed to a variety of cultural styles and all lessons are effectively planned to include some listening which is related to practical work. For instance, the music of Fats Waller, Elvis Presley, Mozart and Poulenc all featured regularly in lessons during the week of the inspection as examples of composing and performing techniques with which students could identify and to which they could aspire. In this way their musicianship increases steadily through both listening and creative music making. Discipline is very good, firm and friendly, and lessons are orderly. Students enjoy the self-



discipline of practicing their keyboard and other instrumental and vocal skills individually and in pairs. Many of them develop a clear understanding of their own creative capabilities. Teachers generate a lively response from classes through rigorous questioning, which makes students think for themselves in musical terms. For example, students in a Year 9 class deepened their understanding of chord structures in their own composing after listening analytically to some rock 'n' roll music. All students' performing and composing is monitored effectively from lesson to lesson. Those doing GCSE are frequently given personalised plans based on assessments of their work to focus their individual skills and maximise their progress.

147. Attitudes to music throughout the college are positive and behaviour is good. Most students take responsibility for their practising and performing and enjoy the challenge this imposes on them when working unsupervised. The number of students taking extra instrumental lessons is fewer than might be expected and the department is aware of the need to encourage more to take advantage of the extensive range of opportunities available. The interest shown in the increasing range of extra-curricular activities covering a wide range of cultures is good. Impressive standards of performance are achieved in groups like the choir and wind band. Over 100 students get involved in an on-going programme of concerts and musical events each year.
148. Since the previous inspection there have been changes of staff and a new head of department has been appointed. Schemes of work for Key Stage 3 have been revised and a similar programme is now needed for Key Stage 4. Resources in the second music room have been improved and a supply of computers has recently been installed. Teachers are now ready to make full use of this resource, supported by in-service training. The strong leadership and efficient management of the department are making a significant impact on the performing arts in the college and on the musical progress of all the students involved.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

149. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 students' attainment is above expectations for their age. Students achieve well across a wide and relevant range of activities. These include basketball, hockey, netball, volleyball, dance and fitness. For example, students in a Year 7 dance class develop with precision a series of quite complex sequences of dance movements with increasing fluency and clarity. In Year 8 students playing hockey show good levels of understanding and accuracy regarding stick and ball control. They co-operate well in team work with good levels of accuracy. In basketball Year 9 students developing an awareness of the rules and define and apply their ball control and shooting skills well to achieve good levels of accuracy and precision. In Year 10 students playing volleyball achieve good degrees of accuracy and style and technique with ball control and passing across court. Year 11 students playing basketball show a good progressive development of the skills and rules of the game.
150. Students are achieving satisfactorily in gymnastics, though standards in this aspect of physical education are not as high as for all other aspects. In a Year 7 lesson students successfully developed and performed a series of sequences of movement of increasing complexity across a mat. Insufficient opportunities are provided for the students to travel at different levels other than on the floor and for experiences on a wide range of fixed and moveable apparatus. The development of gymnastics is at present hindered due to the fact that some apparatus is awaiting repair. The college has successfully introduced GCSE physical education theoretical studies for Years

10 and 11 students. Here students are already achieving at least satisfactory standards, understanding what is associated with a healthy lifestyle and knowing working definitions of health fitness, performance and exercise. Examination of students' GCSE work in Years 10 and 11 shows good progress, with students presenting and applying themselves to their work well.

151. There have been many improvements at both key stages since the last inspection. Overall, standards are now above instead of in line with the national expectations. Dance is now above average at Key Stage 3, where it was below previously and gymnastics is now in line, where it was previously below. Pack assessments have been effectively completed and the community use of facilities does not now have an impact on departmental efficiency and there is no loss of time in lessons.
152. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This has improved since the last inspection, in particular at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 in about a third of lessons teaching is very good. At Key Stage 4 over half of teaching is very good. At both key stages teachers have high expectations, manage classes well and teach skills effectively. There is no ineffective teaching. During lessons students learn to develop a progressive sequence of skills successfully, increasing their competencies as the lesson progresses. Teachers present, evaluate and support these skills well with both personal and student demonstration. Older students successfully analyse performance through observation and evaluation of their own and others' work and apply this to further develop their own skills. Students work hard at their lessons, enhancing a wide range of competencies and improving their performance. They work at a good pace and show high levels of concentration, enthusiasm and interest. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language learn well alongside their fellow students, achieving equal standards. Standards of learning and the quality of teaching assisting this learning ensures that all students make at least good progress, with a significant number making very good progress.
153. The subject is very well managed. All areas of study are appropriately and very thoroughly documented. This supports the development of high standards and maintenance of good progress. There is a very good team approach, with teachers very successfully monitoring and evaluating lessons as well as improving their own performances. For example, a newly appointed teacher attends dance lessons, taking part with students in the lessons to improve his knowledge and skills, as well as aiding students' development and offering his constructive evaluation of the lesson. The physical education department has a very well qualified staff who have good levels of motivation and enthusiasm for their work as well as high levels of skill and expertise in areas in which they teach. This, together with the very good team spirit, is doing much to improve standards. The department continues to offer an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, as identified at the last inspection, at lunch times, in the evenings and on Saturdays. These include netball, basketball, hockey, dance, athletics, cross-country, football, rounders, tennis and trampolining. These activities encourage students to be involved in a range of competitive sports and they have recently come top in a local basketball league. The range of accommodation is very good. However, the improvement of changing and shower facilities and the provision of a sound barrier between the two areas in the sports hall are recognised areas for development.
154. The staff in the department are to be congratulated on their overall expertise, team work and the improving standard this is bringing to the work of the students. Physical education is a strength of the college.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. Students' attainment in religious education at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with that expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Currently, standards are improving in Key Stage 3, partly because of the good subject knowledge of staff, the ongoing development of departmental documentation, especially schemes of work, and the raising of the profile of the subject within the college. The opportunities offered to students as part of the flexible day allow time for tasks to be completed and for reflection to take place. For example, students have been into the locality and have taken part in valuable stilling exercises outside. GCSE results of students aged 15 are well above the national average and are improving. There has been an increase in the number of students, especially boys, choosing to study religious education. Girls' results are considerably better than boys and all students who follow the examination course achieve good results when compared to those in their other subjects. The college does not provide religious education for all students aged 15 and 16 and, as at the time of the previous inspection, is failing to make this statutory provision.
156. The quality of teaching in the department is good in both key stages. Students are given the opportunity to use knowledge gained in Years 7 and 8 and use it for a basis on which to build. For example, in one Year 9 lesson on 'The Miracles of Jesus' most students knew the facts about the miracles and then went on to think deeper and ask "why?" and "how?" Students are encouraged to make progress in lessons and through homework. In Key Stage 3 the pace of most lessons is lively, with students making better progress than in lessons where they are allowed to complete each task at their own pace. Students with special educational needs and low attaining students achieve satisfactory levels and make good progress with the dedicated help which teachers give in every lesson. High attaining students are not always identified or reminded what is expected of them in lessons or for homework. In Key Stage 3 there is no noticeable difference in the attainment and progress of boys and girls, students with English as an additional language and students from minority ethnic origins. Marking and assessment of students' work is thorough. Valuable comments are made in books and discussed with each student. Students are given targets for improvement and are rewarded for good work with merits and certificates.
157. Departmental documentation has developed and all policies and schemes of work are regularly reviewed. There is no rigid system departmentally for recording students' subject specific targets or progress and identification of strengths and weaknesses. The department, therefore, does not have a clear overview, especially in Year 7 where the subject is taught by teachers from the humanities department. Homework is set and marked regularly and is used effectively to extend and reinforce work done in the lesson. Teachers' expectations of students with differing abilities are not, however, made clear when setting homework. Teachers use a good range of teaching strategies in lessons and students' learning is enhanced by the good general knowledge and experience of staff. The department is at the early stages of developing the use of information technology in the classroom. Teachers encourage students to use information technology at home or elsewhere in college.
158. GCSE students make good progress. They are familiar with the requirements of the examination syllabus and understand the system of grading. When discussing the course they are enthusiastic about the subject and consider it relevant to them. They welcome the opportunities which the teachers and syllabus provide for discussion, debate and listening to visiting speakers. They value teachers' marking and targets which are set. Year 11 GCSE students are able to compare and contrast the

features of the two main religions studied and talk about them in detail. Students are well managed and behaviour in lessons is good. In both key stages students show respect for staff and for each other. Artefacts are handled respectfully. The department makes a valuable contribution to the college's literacy policy. Staff and students use subject vocabulary, spellings are checked carefully and corrections are done.

159. The curriculum is broad, well balanced and follows the Dudley Agreed Syllabus. It is enhanced by the many extended opportunities that the flexible day provides. There are additional opportunities for students to work in the department in their own time. The department makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of students. The curriculum offers opportunities for learning about Christianity and the other main religions of this country. In addition, students take part in a college Japanese culture day. GCSE students take responsibility for their own learning and course work from Year 11 is on schedule. Similar opportunities for Key Stage 3 students are sometimes limited as students are desk-based and many lessons are teacher led.
160. The department is well managed under the umbrella of humanities. The strengths of the department are the consistency of good teaching, the GCSE results, good behaviour and attitudes of students and caring student teacher relationships. Those areas needing further development include the arrangements for the recording of targets for students, both departmentally and when reporting to parents, which are under-developed. Work in lessons is not always well matched to students' needs, especially for high attaining students in Year 7. The department is making insufficient use of information technology to give all students access in lesson time. The college does not provide religious education courses for all students in Years 10 and 11.