

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LAUNCESTON COLLEGE**

Launceston

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112037

Headteacher: Alan Wroath

Reporting inspector: Ray Palmer  
31198

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 186624

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Dunheved Road Launceston Cornwall
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Nigel Parker
Date of previous inspection:	15 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup> January 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. R. Palmer	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
Mrs. C. L. Rentoul	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Mr. G. Allison	Team inspector	Information technology	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
		6 <sup>th</sup> Form provision	
Mr. A. M. Bennett	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
		Equality of opportunity	
		Special educational needs	
Mr. J. E. Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education	
Dr. N. Carr	Team inspector	Business studies	
		Economics	
Mr. R. Carvell	Team inspector	Art	
		Design and technology	
Ms. E. Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	
Mr. P. Gilliat	Team inspector	History	
Mr. F. G. J. Harris	Team inspector	Religious education	
Dr. A. Marfleet	Team inspector	English	
Mr. M. M. Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr. I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Dr. V. H. Williams	Team inspector	Geography	
Mr. R. Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Launceston College became a specialist technology college in September 1998 and is a co-educational, local authority maintained, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. It serves the town of Launceston and the surrounding rural area. Nearly all pupils in the area attend the college. About half of the pupils use school transport, often covering large distances. The college has a broad social mix of pupils, but many pupils are from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. The college is bigger than other secondary schools. The roll has increased each year since the previous inspection of January 1996 and now contains 1311 pupils, with 171 students in the sixth form. Few pupils leave or enter the school between the different key stages. Pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the college are broadly average. Students enter the sixth form having achieved GCSE results in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (nine per cent) is below the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs (16.5 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average and the proportion with statements of special educational needs (5.4 per cent) is well above the national average. Less than two per cent of pupils are from different ethnic backgrounds. The college's boarding house currently caters for thirteen boys. A unit for pupils with severe learning difficulties opened on site in February 2000.

### **HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS**

Launceston College is an effective school. It benefits from very good leadership. Management at all levels is good. The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved since the previous inspection and pupils are expected to work hard. Results in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science are above national averages, GCSE results are average and A level results are below average but improving. The college has considerably more strengths than weaknesses and has the capacity to maintain the pace of improvement. It manages its resources well and provides good value for money.

#### **What the college does well**

- Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection, particularly in the overall quality of teaching and learning, which have helped pupils' standards of work to rise.
- The headteacher's very good leadership and the good management at all levels within the college give a clear direction for further raising of standards.
- The college has a positive ethos characterised by good relationships, friendly pupils and approachable staff; it provides a good standard of care for all pupils which results in pupils wanting to work hard to succeed.
- Standards are good in many subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 and are improving in the sixth form.
- Results in Key Stage 3 national tests continue to improve and are above the national average.
- Careers education is a strength of the college. Links with the community are good. Pupils are well prepared for adult life.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the college because they receive good teaching and support.
- Many pupils enhance their work by participating in a good range of extra-curricular activities.

### What could be improved

- A level results are below average. GCSE results at A\*-C have improved but could be higher.
- In several subjects there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and computing skills and this hinders their progress.
- Standards in art are not high enough, especially in GCSE, because teaching has lacked rigour.
- Pupils' spiritual awareness is underdeveloped; they rarely reflect on life's experiences.
- Provision for religious education in the sixth form and for daily collective worship does not meet statutory requirements
- The accommodation in some areas such as science, English, physical education and art is inadequate to meet pupils' learning needs, especially when classes are large.

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

### HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made significant progress in meeting the key issues from the previous inspection in January 1996. Long term planning is much better. The work of the college and departments is more coherently linked. The quality of both teaching and learning is now good and procedures for rigorous monitoring and evaluating of these are very effective. Standards have improved in most subjects. Recently, performances in Key Stage 3 national tests have been above average; GCSE results average; A level results have improved but are still below average. A slight narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' performances has occurred in some subjects. Work is now better suited to the needs of all pupils; planning to meet the needs of very high attaining pupils is satisfactory but at an early stage. Better use is made of assessment and marking to help pupils improve their work. Behaviour and discipline have improved and are generally good. Computing facilities are much better and the teaching of information technology now meets statutory requirements, although not all subjects make sufficient use of the computers to enhance pupils' learning. Generally appropriate arrangements for child protection are now in place. Statutory requirements are still not met for the provision of collective worship and for sixth form religious education. A few issues remain to be addressed in art.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	D
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	D	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

GCSE results have been close to the national average in the last three years. In 1999, pupils' results were below the average for similar schools.

Results in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, in 1999, were above the national averages for all schools and for similar schools. In the period 1996 to 1999 the college's overall performance in these tests rose in line with the national trend and the results achieved by both boys and girls were above average. In 1999, results in mathematics were well above those of similar schools.



Results at A level improved in 1999, but remain below national averages. Most students obtain grades in A level examinations to be expected from what they have already achieved in their GCSE examinations.

Standards of work seen in classes are often above average in many subjects, showing improvements in learning and overall, pupils' progress is good throughout the college. The college sets appropriate targets for pupils and students in their external examinations.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the college	Good overall. Pupils generally respect each other and their teachers; they take their work seriously so that learning is a positive experience.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. The college sets high expectations for appropriate behaviour through the consistent application of the assertive discipline policy, which creates a good climate for teaching and learning. The number of exclusions is below average
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are very good. Pupils' personal development is good and helps them gain in confidence and maturity as they move through the college.
Attendance	Procedures for monitoring attendance and recording lateness are appropriate. Attendance remains satisfactory.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>aged 14-16 years</b>	<b>Aged over 16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	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.*

Teaching and learning are good overall and examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects and key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, manage their classes well and plan their lessons effectively. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons seen; it was good in 57 per cent and very good or better in a further 20 per cent of lessons. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in drama, music and personal and social education and was due mainly to unsatisfactory preparation. In English and science, teaching is good throughout the college; in mathematics it is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. In the large majority of lessons, the work is well matched to the needs of pupils of different attainment, including those with special educational needs. Strategies to ensure that the highest attainers are suitably challenged are satisfactory. Homework is well used in many subjects to enhance learning; in a few subjects the provision of homework is unsatisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The college provides a generally broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Provision for religious education in the sixth form is insufficient. Pupils enhance their work through a good programme of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make good progress in all years and receive good levels of support. Strategies to cater more effectively for the needs of pupils of very high ability are satisfactory and at an early stage.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good for pupils' social development and good for moral and cultural development. Pupils have few opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness. The programme for personal and health education is satisfactory. Relatively few pupils have opportunities to take positions of responsibility.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral support is good. Staff care well for the pupils. Assessment procedures work well and suitable targets are set for pupils to improve their work. The college's partnership with parents is generally effective; parents receive appropriate and good information.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The overall quality of leadership and management within the college is good. Appropriate strategies for improvement are raising standards and have led to improvements in teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive and effective. They monitor the college's development, staffing, curriculum and finances efficiently.
The school's evaluation of its performance	A wide range of college activities, particularly teaching and learning, are regularly and effectively monitored, giving governors and senior managers a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. enabling appropriate targets for improvement to be set.
The strategic use of resources	The work of the governors' finance committee is committed to the principle of best value. The college makes good use of its generally adequate staffing, accommodation and learning resources.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Standards are continuing to improve.</li> <li>• Pupils are happy at the college.</li> <li>• The teaching is generally good.</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and they make good progress.</li> <li>• Provision for pupils with special educational needs is mostly good.</li> <li>• Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Parents feel welcome and the college listens carefully to any concerns.</li> <li>• Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Pastoral care is good.</li> <li>• College has coped very well with some recent tragic events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and amount of homework are inconsistent.</li> <li>• Behaviour of a small minority of pupils is poor.</li> <li>• There is a small amount of poor teaching.</li> <li>• A few feel that the school does not provide enough information about college activities.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all of parents' positive comments. In respect of the areas for improvement, inspectors agree that the quality and frequency of homework, although often good, are inconsistent in a few subjects. During the inspection, pupils behaved well; only a very few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour were seen and teachers dealt effectively with these. There is a minority of pupils with behavioural difficulties whom teachers for the most part manage sensitively. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed, but the large majority of teaching observed was good or better. Inspectors consider that the college provides sufficient information of good quality to keep parents well informed about all aspects of college life, but occasionally the information is a little late arriving home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The college's results and achievements**

1. Standards of attainment overall are in line with national averages. In 1999, results in the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the age of fourteen were above the national averages for all schools and for all similar schools. Results in the GCSE examinations taken by pupils at the age of sixteen, were in line with national averages for all schools, and below the national averages for similar schools. Results in A level at the end of Year 13 were below the national average.

2. Results in external examinations at all levels are generally improving. In a few subjects, the standards of work observed in classes, particularly in the sixth form, are higher than those achieved recently in external examinations.

3. Pupils' standards of achievement, as observed in classes and through scrutiny of their current and previous work, are above average overall. Relative to their capabilities and previous attainments, pupils currently are making good progress in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4.

4. The profile of pupils' attainment on entry to the college has risen from below average at the time of the previous inspection, to broadly average for the current Year 7. This is shown by the pupils' prior performances in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 and by their results in cognitive ability tests taken in Year 7.

#### ***National Curriculum assessments at age 14***

5. In both 1998 and 1999, the college's results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average for all schools in English, mathematics and science. In 1999, the results in the tests in English and science were above, and in those for mathematics were well above, the average achieved by similar schools

6. In the four-year period 1996 to 1999, the trend in the college's results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in English, mathematics and science, rose in line with the national trend. During this period, the performances of both boys and girls were above their respective national averages.

#### ***GCSE results at age 16***

7. In 1999, the college met its target of 47 per cent of pupils to achieve five or more passes at A\*-C in the GCSE examinations. For the current Year 11 targets are set at a challenging, but realistic level of 50 per cent of pupils to gain at least five A\*-C passes and for 99 per cent to achieve five or more A\*-G grades.

8. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving the equivalent of five or more passes at grades A\*-C was close to the national average for all schools and for similar schools. The proportion achieving five or more passes at grades A\*-G was close to the national average for all schools and below that for similar schools. The college's overall results in GCSE examinations were close to the average for all schools and below the average for similar schools, partly because a few pupils of Year 11 age were in Year 10 and did not sit GCSE examinations last year.

9. Based on averages over the period 1997 to 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more grades A\*-C at GCSE examinations was close to the national average and the proportion gaining at least five grades A\*-G was above average.

10. Performances at A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations in 1999 were well above the national average in history and Spanish, above average in science and close to the average in all other subjects apart from in art and English literature where they were well below average.

11. Performances at A\*-G grades, in nearly all subjects, were above the national average in 1999.

12. Pupils' grades in GCSE art examinations have been well below national averages in recent years and are below their average grades in other subjects.

13. The trend in the college's GCSE results was below the national trend over the period 1994 to 1999. Based on the three-year period 1997 to 1999, pupils' results were close to the national average; the rise in the score for boys was close to their national average, and that for girls was above their national average.

14. Comparing performances in GCSE examinations in 1999 with similar schools, and taking into account pupils' prior attainments in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997, pupils' attainments in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were average overall, and average in English, mathematics and science.

#### ***A level and GNVQ results***

15. A level results in 1999, although better than in 1998, were below the national average and have been below the national average for the last four years. In 1998, the results in the Advanced GNVQ courses were above average, but in 1999 they were below average.

16. The college makes a careful analysis of students' results at A level in an attempt to help students maximise their potential achievements. Comparing the results of 54 students at A level in 1999 with predictions based on the students' individual results in GCSE examinations two years earlier, most students achieved in line with expectations, ten gained higher than expected results and fifteen gained lower than expected results. This shows improvement on the previous year, when the proportion gaining better than expected A level results was low.

#### ***Learning and progress***

17. Pupils make good progress, relative to their earlier attainments, in most subjects throughout the college. There is a gradual narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' performances, but not in every subject.

18. Currently, standards of work in Key Stage 3 are above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Standards of work in classes in other subjects are above average in design and technology and music and broadly average in all other subjects.

19. In Key Stage 4, standards in classes observed are well above average in music, above average in science, design and technology, geography, history and physical education and average in all other subjects. Standards of work seen in the vocational courses in Key Stage 4 are average and most pupils on these courses are making at least satisfactory progress

20. Standards observed in sixth form examination classes were above average in most subjects and average in English and modern foreign languages. The college has put in place a number of initiatives, including mentoring, that are proving effective in monitoring students' performance and helping to combat underachievement.

21. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects at all key stages and attain standards at least in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. Pupils of lowest attainment in both English and mathematics benefit from being taught in small classes, by teachers who are specialised in teaching pupils with special educational needs. Teachers carefully target pupils' individual levels of literacy and numeracy, which are subsequently boosted. This work helps these pupils improve their below average skills, with the result that they more confidently tackle the broader college curriculum. The approach is successful in raising levels of attainment for many pupils, who make good progress because of the motivation achieved through good use of the teachers' expertise and of appropriate resources. In a few subjects, pupils do not always make good progress because there is a lack of differentiated tasks.

22. Pupils with high ability make satisfactory progress overall. The college has identified a number of pupils with very high ability, based on cognitive ability test results and teachers' observations. It is in the early stages of developing a programme across the curriculum of stimulating and challenging activities for these pupils.

23. Standards of literacy are improving and are satisfactory throughout the college and in most subjects. The school's attempts to raise standards of literacy are meeting with some success. There is scope for further development and refinement of the strategy to improve literacy skills to ensure that the progress of lower attaining pupils is not hindered because of inadequate standards of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In many subjects, pupils display good speaking and listening skills and pay careful attention to the teacher and to each other in oral discussion work.

24. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are satisfactory and improving. They use these skills to good effect to enhance their work in a few subjects, notably in business studies and GNVQ courses, but make insufficient use of computers to develop their work in many subjects in Key Stage 4.

25. Standards of numeracy have improved since the last inspection. Pupils use their generally sound mathematical knowledge satisfactorily to support their studies in a few contexts across the curriculum, as they progress through the college. They perform mental calculations quickly and with accuracy and occasionally apply their numerical skills well, as in musical composition when considering musical form, and in physical education to construct a 'handicap' system for competitions. They calculate intervals of time in French and apply formulae correctly in science. They practise their skills in graphical and other data handling work to satisfactory effect in geography, science, design and technology and in information technology. Few subjects have included the development of pupils' skills of numeracy into their programmes of work, with the result that pupils have too few opportunities to practise their skills.

26. Very little underachievement by pupils was observed in lessons. Factors that contribute to the small amount of underachievement in a few subjects include: the insufficiently high expectations of a few pupils or, very occasionally, of the teacher; the inconsistency among a few departments and teachers in the quality, amount and frequency of homework to support pupils' learning.

27. The college is working hard and successfully to improve its performance in all subjects. It has developed methods to analyse performance data and to set appropriately challenging targets for departments. The college's targets for 2000 aim for an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations to 50 per cent and for the average points score per pupil to rise to 39. These are suitably challenging targets taking into account the previous attainment of this year group in their National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, and when set against the college's achievements for 1999 of 47.7 and 37.5 per cent respectively.

28. The college is not complacent about its achievements. It is rightly pleased with the good results achieved in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. It is aware that results in GCSE could improve to a position above national averages. In recognition that results in A level examinations are not high enough in several subjects it has introduced a number of initiatives, with the aims of providing a relevant curriculum and raising standards to an appropriately high level for each individual student. Some of these measures, especially the use of the improved system of assessment to reduce underachievement and to help predict future performances, are already working. The introduction of vocational courses in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form has helped to motivate pupils and students. Results in GCSE examinations have improved in subjects that were previously underperforming, such as Spanish and information studies, although strategies to improve the results in art have not yet succeeded. The focus since the last inspection on improving the quality of teaching and learning is proving successful in raising standards.

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

29. Pupils have responded well to the new discipline policy, which has been introduced since the last inspection. Pupils know that good behaviour will be noticed and rewarded and that disruption and bullying will not be condoned. As a result, behaviour in the classroom and around the college is good and pupils take their work seriously. They come to college to learn but they also take advantage of the social opportunities, which the college offers their scattered community, and form good relationships with their peers.

30. Pupils respect their teachers and respond to good teaching. Occasionally there are lapses when the pace is too slow but, in general, pupils listen well and respond to direct questioning confidently. They are less confident about contributing to whole class discussions.

31. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good which makes the tutor system very effective. The exclusion rate is low but pupils know that if they fail to take notice of a series of warnings they will be given fixed term exclusion. They also take part in surveys on issues such as bullying, in this way helping teachers to gain a real picture of the quality of relationships in the college. Behaviour around the school is sensible and not threatening for younger pupils. Lunchtime staff find few problems. Sixth form students work effectively with Year 7 pupils to help them improve their reading skills. Many pupils in all years enhance

their work by joining in extra-curricular activities and all take part in work experience and the Activities Week.

32. Pupils with special educational needs integrate well in the life of the school. Some are members of the boarding house and benefit from the stability this environment gives them and make progress in their studies. Pupils from the unit for pupils with severe learning difficulties or with physical handicaps are integrated well into mainstream classes, where other pupils work willingly and supportively alongside them. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards the college and their work. They behave well in lessons, even where the work is challenging and not sufficiently differentiated. In classes within the special educational needs area, behaviour is always very good. Pupils with severe learning difficulties behave well both within their own area and when moving around the college and using its facilities.

33. Pupils' progress towards targets in their individual education plans is monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Code of Practice. Regular reviews of targets ensure that pupils' progress is thoroughly monitored and that assessments are used to help plan appropriate future work.

34. The special educational needs co-ordinator sees raising self-esteem as a central goal of her team and as a crucial factor impacting on the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs. Provision made for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs achieves this goal on most occasions.

35. Replies to the parents' questionnaire suggest that all pupils take more responsibility for their own work as they move through the college. However, there are insufficient opportunities for them to take part in the organisation of the life of the school. A few serve on the School Council, some play in school teams valuing the contact this brings with other schools. All pupils treat the college resources with respect and look after their own possessions carefully. They value their Records of Achievement and look after their Contact books, which provide a basis for the organisation of their own work and an informal means of monitoring their progress.

36. Attendance figures are satisfactory and have not changed significantly since the last inspection. The college is working hard to raise the awareness among pupils of the need to improve attendance and punctuality. A small minority persists in arriving late and disrupting the start of lessons.

37. Overall, the behaviour and attitudes of all pupils have greatly improved since the last inspection. During this inspection relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers were very good and helped to provide a positive environment for learning.

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

38. The overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school. This is reflected in the good quality of learning. Pupils made good progress in the great majority of lessons observed and some good teaching was observed in all subjects.

39. The college's decision, in response to the criticisms made in the previous report, to make the improvement in the quality of both teaching and learning its main priority, has produced good results. The rigorous monitoring and observation of classroom practice have resulted in the setting of suitably high quality standards for all teachers. The sharing of good practice within and across departments, and the carefully considered use and



application of professional development for teachers, have helped many teachers become more proficient.

40. A total of 208 lessons was observed during the inspection. In 98 per cent of these lessons, teaching was at least satisfactory. Teaching was judged to be good in 57 per cent of the lessons seen and very good and occasionally excellent in a further 20 per cent. These figures represent a significant improvement on the figures from the previous inspection when the quality of both teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in less than 75 per cent of lessons seen.

41. In Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is good overall in all subjects. In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is good apart from in mathematics and religious education where it is satisfactory. In the sixth form the quality of teaching is good in all subjects apart from religious education where it is satisfactory.

42. Very good teaching was observed in a small number of English classes and especially in science, where one lesson in every three seen was very good. Teaching in science is particularly good at Key Stage 4.

43. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in drama, music and personal and social education, and was mainly due to insufficient preparation by the teacher.

44. The quality of learning is good throughout the school in all subjects apart from geography in Key Stage 3 and mathematics and religious education in Key Stage 4 where it is satisfactory.

45. In science, pupils' learning is enhanced because the planning of lessons leads to purposeful starts, there is plenty of pace throughout, pupils have an interesting variety of tasks to complete and, in the best lessons, the activities are broken down into smaller blocks of time with clear targets for pupils within each section.

46. The proportion of good and very good teaching is similar in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and is higher than in Key Stage 3. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.

47. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs within mainstream classes is generally satisfactory and often good. However, tasks are not always sufficiently matched to their particular needs. In a few subjects, such as history and design technology, pupils with special educational needs are often presented with tasks, including reading materials, which require learning support assistants to take too much responsibility in helping pupils address them. In a few lessons, learning support assistants are underused, while in others they participate fully, as when helping pupils change for physical education, working alongside pupils as a member of a group improvisation in drama, or encouraging pupils to keep on task in reading and writing. In rural science, special training allows a learning support assistant to assess practical work, and many assistants are effective in unobtrusively managing the behaviour of potentially difficult pupils in large teaching groups.

48. Within the special educational needs areas teaching is always good. Thorough planning, careful use of time and resources, and high expectations all create an ethos of trust and success, which provide a good climate for learning. The learning support assistants are fully integrated into teaching and learning strategies and play a significant part in developing pupils' self-esteem through giving just enough support to enable pupils

to complete tasks themselves. One learning support assistant has been specially trained in using a new reading scheme. The effective use of this scheme is dramatically raising the competencies of the least able readers. Pupils also improve their work through their English lessons which begin with a time for private reading, during which teachers and learning support assistants listen to pupils and encourage confident, fluent paired reading.

49. Although some pupils working within the special educational needs area use computers for word-processing, and listening stations are used for the 'Beacon' reading scheme, relatively little use is made of computers in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs across the curriculum.

50. The teaching of literacy skills is one of the college's strategies for improving pupils' overall standards and is satisfactory. The college is aware that more work is needed to raise pupils' skills in spelling and to improve their knowledge and understanding of grammar and punctuation so that their current generally satisfactory standards in literacy become good. Teachers have learned much from the use of a discrete literacy hour lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 8 and are rightly planning to integrate this work more fully into the English teaching programme in future.

51. The teaching of skills in numeracy is good in mathematics lessons and satisfactory in several other subjects. It is effective in helping pupils improve their work in subjects such as design and technology, information technology, geography and science.

52. The teaching of computing skills in discrete information technology lessons is good throughout the college. Most pupils are becoming competent and independent users of computers, but few teachers create sufficient opportunities for pupils to use their skills in information and communication technology to enhance their learning in several subject areas.

53. Most pupils display a good knowledge and understanding of their work, acquire good skills in most subjects and have a good awareness of what they should do to improve. The large majority of pupils maintain their concentration and interest throughout lessons. A few do not always show sufficient interest in their work in a minority of subjects.

54. The quality of teaching in the vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good. Teachers adapt to the different style of teaching, which these courses demand. The quality of learning is also good. Most pupils respond well to the challenges of the tasks and have developed their independent research and organisational skills. The vocational courses are generally successful in motivating the pupils to raise their standards of work.

55. Teachers in all subjects are appropriately qualified and have good knowledge and a secure understanding of their specialist subjects. Teachers manage their classes effectively, have suitably high expectations for attainment and behaviour for their pupils, and provide tasks that challenge the majority of the class. However, the work is sometimes inappropriate for pupils of the highest and of the lowest attainment within the same class.

56. Teachers use learning resources effectively to meet pupils' needs. These resources are generally of good quality and quantity. Teachers and pupils make satisfactory use of the library learning resource centre and benefit from the services provided by the library assistants.

57. In the many lessons where teaching is good and sometimes very good, as observed in a science middle set in Year 8, dealing with compound variables, the lesson has a positive start, the teacher gives the pupils a clear idea of the work to be done and discusses it with them. Praise is well used and expectations are high, with the teacher using probing questions to force pupils to think. The teacher organises the class well to carry out practical tasks and sets work at just the right level to give the pupils sufficient information to work on, but they still have to use their initiative in designing tests. Pupils enjoy the reporting back to the rest of the class at the end of the lesson and learn from each other when discussing how they had carried out their investigations. In this class, the pupils' books are thoroughly marked with constructive comments on how the pupils can improve their work. Homework is well used to support classwork, to provide good opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative work and projects and to develop pupils' skills of independent learning.

58. In the lessons where the quality of teaching was judged satisfactory, several features of good teaching were present. However, these lessons also contained a few shortcomings. In a sixth form English lesson, for example, where several positive features were present, the lesson lacked pace at times and a few students were insufficiently stretched; in a history lesson in Year 9, although pupils had useful information and guidance about the work to be done, the teacher had not communicated to the pupils expectations about what kind of newspaper account they had to provide, so that some pupils diverted their attention from doing the necessary background work. In some lessons there were insufficiently high expectations for all pupils, or a tendency for the teacher to dominate and teach to the middle range of the class, insufficient provision of work to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, or an insufficient amount or quality of homework.

59. The main weaknesses in the very few lessons where teaching or learning were judged unsatisfactory, were poor classroom management by the teacher, low expectations of both teacher and pupils, and poor planning. In one sixth form music lesson, the teacher's lesson preparation was unsatisfactory, students did little more than converse amicably for most of the first thirty minutes; in a personal and social education lesson in Year 8, the teacher did not control the class well at times, pupils talked while the teacher gave answers and time was wasted during the last few minutes of the lesson.

60. The consistency of the setting and marking of homework was raised by a significant minority of parents. Most subjects do set appropriate homework on a regular basis, but in a few subjects, homework is of insufficient amount and quality. This causes confusion among parents and pupils as to what the college's expectations are in respect of homework.

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

61. The college has a clear set of curricular aims. These meet pupils' needs within a broad and balanced framework and prepare them well for adult life. Overall it provides a good range of opportunities across the subjects taught in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Statutory requirements are met at both key stages. Curricular provision for the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Provision for religious education in the sixth form and for the daily act of collective worship is inadequate and does not fulfil statutory requirements.

62. The curriculum at both key stages is broad and balanced. The limited time allocation to some subjects mentioned in the last report has been successfully addressed. Pupils choose either French or Spanish as their preferred modern language on entry to the college. Pupils in Key Stage 4 who study a second foreign language do so in after school

lessons. The number of pupils who take up this option is low. In Key Stage 4, pupils can choose two optional subjects to take to GCSE level or GNVQ Part 1 in information technology. This arrangement provides a broad range of choice for pupils. The provision of information technology is now good in Key Stage 3 where all pupils receive specialist teaching. At Key Stage 4 there is less timetabled provision and although computing is used in several subjects to support teaching and learning there is no complete picture that maps each pupil's access to information technology. In addition, some subjects do not fully utilise this resource.

63. For the most part, there is equality of access to the statutory curriculum, but pupils' access to information and communication technology in science depends on the teacher allocated to the group.

64. The sixth form curricular provision is satisfactory. There is a wide range of A and A/S subjects available as well as GNVQ at Advanced and Intermediate levels. Students can combine GNVQ and Advanced level courses and the arrangements for individuals to progress to higher-level courses within the college are good. Breadth is provided through personal and social education, which incorporates careers advice, a foreign language at work course and general studies. Opportunities to develop students' information technology skills are provided. At present, the school is planning amendments to the sixth form curriculum to fit the new pattern of A/S levels and key skills teaching for September 2000. However, provision for religious education in Year 13 is absent and the time available for recreational and physical education is limited. These were identified as areas for development in the previous report.

65. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities. A particular strength is the opportunities for involvement in sporting activities both as members of school teams and through internal competitions between tutor groups. A high proportion of pupils participates in sports and games organised through physical education. Similarly, pupils benefit from a good range of activities in music, including choirs, orchestra and ensemble work. Visiting instrumentalists provide a good range of tuition. Other valuable activities include drama sessions and annual drama productions of good quality arranged through the expressive arts department; design and technology clubs; trips and visits; dance sessions, and an activity week, which offers a wide range of events and excursions and involves all pupils. There is also good provision for supported study, including a GCSE course in astronomy, in addition to lessons. Revision sessions and subject specific support groups are offered. In particular, pupils have good access to the information technology and library resources, which provide opportunities for supporting their learning.

66. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall with some good features. The provision has improved since the last inspection. It is now well co-ordinated and covers a good range of topics that are relevant to particular year groups. These include attention to drug misuse. Sex education is taught effectively through personal, social and health education and science lessons. A particular strength is the developing involvement of the college in the Health Promotion in Schools Project. There is now a good system of monitoring the delivery and content of personal, social and health education both by lesson observation and by pupil questionnaires. There is good use of visiting speakers and drama to emphasise appropriate issues. The over-reliance on booklets in some personal, social and health education lessons reduces the opportunities for pupils to explore issues more deeply.

67. The arrangements for careers education are very good. The college has achieved the 'Investors in Careers' award. There is an integrated careers programme that runs throughout the school. Particular strengths are the use of information technology, a comprehensive work experience programme in which all pupils participate, a 'mock' interview for all pupils and very good links with Cornwall and Devon Careers. Careers conventions are held regularly and advice to pupils as they move between key stages in the college is appropriate and well balanced. Parents are fully involved. After each careers event there is a full evaluation to help with planning for the future. Links for further and higher education are well established and a comprehensive programme of visits, speakers and information is made available to all students

68. The quality of links with the community and other schools and colleges is also very good. A particular strength is the college's work with primary schools. Pupils from primary schools visit the college to use the facilities, for example in information technology, design and technology and in science, and teachers from the college teach in the primary schools. This helps ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary education and assists curricular continuity. Pupils benefit from the college's very good links with the business world through the Training and Enterprise Council for Devon and Cornwall and the Cornwall Education Business Partnership. Local businesses are fully involved with the college through its status as a Technology College. Students in the sixth form receive valuable help and advice through the good links with Higher and Further Education colleges. The science department recently organised and hosted a successful conference for A level physicists and teachers from the college and other local secondary schools. Lecturers from institutions of higher education supported this conference. The college's programme to develop its teaching and learning aspects is enriched through the operation of its good Initial Teacher Training scheme and facilities. Students from the college participate in 'master classes' organised by local universities.

69. There has been considerable improvement in curricular provision since the last inspection. Statutory requirements for information technology are now met. There is better planning for differentiated work in subjects. Vocational courses at appropriate levels have been introduced. For example, GNVQ courses at Advanced and Intermediate levels run successfully as does the GNVQ Part 1 course in Key Stage 4. The time allocation to subjects at both key stages is now satisfactory although the provision for the study of a second foreign language through after school lessons has resulted in limited take-up by the pupils. A well-organised, relevant and monitored personal and social education course has been developed and the provision for general studies in the sixth form has improved. Most sixth form classes are now of satisfactory size. However, the implementation of the school's homework policy remains variable.

70. In mainstream classes, pupils with special educational needs have access to a full curriculum and are assessed in accordance with college and subject policies. Where GCSE is not felt to be the appropriate assessment at the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are entered for alternative accreditation such as tests in Basic Skills or Certificates of Achievement.

71. The college's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection and the college has effectively addressed most of the shortcomings outlined in that report.

72. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Whilst some subjects such as religious education, music, English, drama and expressive arts make a good contribution, many opportunities are missed in other subjects and in collective worship to develop an awareness of self and to offer time for reflection. The quality of collective worship is inconsistent. Religious and spiritual dimensions remain largely under-developed.

73. The college's provision for the moral development of pupils is good. Standards of behaviour are good and teachers' expectations are consistently high. Religious education, physical education, science, history and modern foreign languages all encourage pupils to consider moral and social issues. The difference between right and wrong is taught and upheld across the college. Staff are good role models for pupils. High moral standards are reinforced across the school and heads of year and form tutors effectively support and encourage high standards of behaviour.

74. The provision made for the social development of pupils is very good and a strength of the college. Pupils are encouraged to care for one another and take responsibility for one another's welfare. The sense of community is strong and the college has involved pupils in raising considerable sums of money for many charitable causes including £750 raised recently for Mozambique. Most subjects offer pupils opportunities to work together effectively in pairs and groups. There is a very good and wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. Music, physical education, English, drama and expressive arts involve pupils in competitions and public performances.

75. Cultural development is good. Art, design technology, history, English and modern foreign languages all make good contributions to cultural development by enabling pupils to discover and explore other cultures across the world. Religious education makes a specific contribution through the study of world religions in Year 9. Some subject areas make good efforts to broaden the range of pupils' experiences and understanding, notably English, drama, music, personal and social education and religious education. The library contains a good range of new and attractive texts by writers from other cultures and traditions. Opportunities are missed in a number of subjects to develop pupils' awareness of the contributions made by other cultures to the world scene.

76. Collective worship is provided for pupils twice a week. These assemblies are good social occasions and many moral and social issues are raised. On some occasions spiritual issues are raised but the pattern is inconsistent. The college still does not meet statutory requirements to provide collective worship for all pupils every day.

### ***The SLD Unit***

77. The college unit for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD Unit) opened in February 2000 and so is still at an early stage of development. It caters for pupils who have appropriate statements of special educational needs. Currently, there are four pupils on roll, and two other pupils from the mainstream school spend some of their time in the Unit. In the longer term, it will provide up to twelve pupil places. Many of the pupils are already integrated into some mainstream lessons within the college, the extent of the integration depending on the needs and abilities of individual pupils. Integration is seen as a way of raising attainment and developing self-esteem where the circumstances are appropriate, rather than as an end in itself. Additional support is provided for these pupils in mainstream classrooms by learning support assistants. Class teachers are well briefed about pupils' needs, and of relevant targets within their individual education plans, before these pupils join a mainstream group.

78. The Unit is a dedicated suite of rooms, including facilities for life skills work and a

private outside area, within the main part of the building, which gives pupils easy access to all college facilities and resources. The pupils are encouraged to mix socially with their peers, for example, by attending tutor group periods. The mainstream pupils react naturally to pupils from the Unit and fully accept their presence.

79. Teaching is provided mainly by the newly-appointed Head of Unit and two learning support assistants. Other members of the college staff provide regular specialist support within the Unit in addition to the opportunities for integration into mainstream lessons. Staff enjoy working with these pupils, and the feeling is reciprocated. Teaching in the Unit already has many strengths, including planning which is detailed and specific to individual needs, well-structured and paced lessons, ongoing assessment of pupils' progress through probing questions and the use of a wide range of materials and resources, including information and communication technology. The curriculum followed by pupils provides access to the National Curriculum, with an emphasis on basic skills and life skills. Pupils' individual needs are met through individual education plans, which are currently being reviewed.

80. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and caring, but suitably challenging in terms of developing pupils' independence. Teachers and learning support assistants have appropriate expectations of pupils, although the assistants occasionally do too much for the pupils. Pupils are already making good progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills and in other curricular areas such as art and physical education. They understand how to behave in the college, for example in moving to and from the library and when using its facilities. The ethos helps pupils to develop self-esteem, which underpins the positive attitudes they bring to their work both within the Unit and in mainstream classes. Resources are very good, and its setting-up has been very well managed.

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

81. The college works hard to make good provision for the care of all its students. For those in Year 7 this starts before their entry to the school. After making the prospectus available to parents and visiting the primary schools to make contact with pupils, the college holds parents' evenings and 'taster days' for their children. Summer literacy schools are held for Year 6 pupils and summer science and technology schools are held jointly for Year 6 and 7 pupils. Once in the college all families are asked to enter a home/school contract and pupils become part of a tutor group. They remain with the same group until the end of Key Stage 4. Tutor groups are a vital part of the pastoral care and of the assessment of all pupils' academic progress. Tutors get to know their pupils well so that the informal monitoring backing up all assessment is accurate and supportive.

82. Special educational needs staff, and mainstream teachers, take good care of pupils. There is no evidence of pupils with special educational needs being bullied or harassed, and they attend well. Their attainment and progress are constantly monitored against individual education plans and statements, and effective support and advice are provided during lessons and in formal reviews.

83. The college buildings are well kept. Regular risk assessments and safety checks are carried out in the main building. Although the fire services have not attended a fire practice recently, staff and the governor responsible for health and safety are aware of the routines involved.

84. Since the last inspection, the college has updated arrangements for child protection and increased the number of staff who have undergone training. The arrangements are clearly set out in the staff handbook and therefore are known to all staff. However, there is currently no arrangement in place to ensure that all trained staff attend follow-up courses at appropriate intervals. In the boarding house, pastoral care is very effective and the majority of the recommendations made in a Social Services audit have been carried out.

85. The policy on discipline and the careful monitoring of any incidence of bullying have improved behaviour in the school. Staff work together well as a team and have evolved a system of back up so that any teacher can summon help if behaviour should threaten to get out of control in the classroom or boarding house. Pupils say that they feel secure in the college and are aware of the college's expectations for good behaviour.

86. There is a carefully structured and satisfactory personal and social education programme throughout the college, which raises pupils' awareness of issues such as healthy eating, and road safety. Advice on careers from Year 7 onwards and then a related work experience programme form a valuable part of the education offered by the college. The status of Technology College has strengthened links with local business and there is a wide range of work experience available for pupils of all abilities. The college encourages pupils to arrange their own choices but monitors the arrangements carefully, expecting evaluation from pupils and employers alike. Carrying out college policy for inclusion in mainstream education of the maximum number of pupils, the programme caters for pupils with special educational needs wherever possible. Overall, the careers advice and work experience programmes are strengths of the school.

87. Since the last inspection, attendance registers have been computerised which allows prompt and efficient tracking of absence and punctuality. Contact books are used on a daily basis throughout the college, allowing parents to monitor their children's progress through the year not just from the annual reports. These are now satisfactory and contain some simple target setting by pupils themselves. Records of Achievement are compiled with care, and academic monitoring has been improved, using assessment data to promote pupils' learning.

88. The quality of support and guidance provided has improved since the last inspection. In particular, the commitment of the tutorial staff has not only improved behaviour across the college but helped pupils to cope with some recent tragic experiences in their community with resilience and maturity.

89. The college has made significant improvement in assessment, recording and reporting since the last inspection.

90. The college's policies and guidelines on assessment and recording are good. It has a large bank of assessment data and effectively uses this data to assist in the setting of targets. Most departments use the data to assist in setting individual targets in their subject. Regular and effective target setting takes place in science, religious education, physical education and history. Target setting in some subjects is not fully developed in the sixth form.

91. The marking of pupils' work is mostly good. Constructive comments and clear targets for improvement in many subjects accompany marks. Whilst pupils at Key Stage 4 and the students in the Sixth Form are aware of their attainment levels, at Key Stage 3 in many subjects, pupils are not.



92. Records of pupils' attainments are good and there is considerable consistency between departments. Procedures and practices are monitored effectively. In all subjects, assessment and recording satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum. The college has developed a detailed centralized system for recording pupils' attainment.

93. The college has developed suitable systems to measure pupils' performances when they arrive and when they leave. This data and other assessment information from tests and marked work are not used well enough by teachers in some subjects to adjust their lesson planning in order to help pupils improve.

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

94. The partnership between college and parents has become more effective since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The college does its best to keep parents fully informed of pupils' progress. Staff are always accessible for families wanting to come in to college to discuss anxieties of any kind. Equally the tutors always involve parents when making decisions about minor or serious disciplinary matters. There are good home/school contracts, which set out the college's expectations clearly, and heads of department consult with parents about entry to public examinations. Parents are recognising the value of further and higher education.

95. The special educational needs co-ordinator is involved in Year 6 reviews and so meets parents of potential college pupils at an early stage. The college distributes a good parental guide to special educational needs at Launceston College that is readable and practical. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs attends the Year 7 intake evening and is available to talk to parents then or at any other time by request.

96. Replies to the parent's questionnaire show that a huge majority of parents value the accessibility of staff and respect the leadership and management within the college. They appreciate the expectations for good behaviour and a high standard of work. A few parents questioned the quality of information that they receive from the college. The quality of information sent to parents is good and some is very good, but in a few instances the delivery of information was slow, so that parents felt out of date with what was going on in the school.

97. The headteacher regularly attends meetings of the Parent Teacher Association and uses them to keep parents informed of curricular development as it affects their children. Some parents, however, find the technicalities and language of the modern curriculum, such as reference to levels, difficult to grasp and lack sufficient guidance to enable them to extract full benefit from the information they receive. Overall, the information provided is very good and parents are welcomed in to the college to discuss progress reports and attend events such as drama productions. Staff are aware of the problems caused by lack of transport in a scattered rural community and appreciate the efforts some families have to make to attend out of hours events.

98. Parents show themselves to be aware of the importance of their partnership with the college in furthering their children's education in a number of ways. They encourage their children to stay on at the college in the sixth form; they are prepared to fund instrumental music lessons, they take advantage of the opportunities given by Activities Week and offer help as governors or contributors to the work experience programme. The college has worked hard since the last inspection to make this partnership more effective, especially through the quality of information parents now receive about their children's progress.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

99. The overall quality of leadership and management in the college is good. Governors, parents and pupils justifiably praise the very good leadership of the head teacher. He sets a very good personal example to pupils and staff and has, with good support from the staff and pupils, instigated many and considerable improvements in recent years, that have helped raise pupils' standards and their self-esteem. He is well supported by the governors and a strong senior management team, who work together effectively and provide a clear vision of the educational direction for the college. Governors and the senior management team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and those areas for development that will further enhance pupils' standards of attainment.

100. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is at least good in nearly all subjects. The heads of year provide good leadership and carry out their responsibilities effectively. The special educational needs co-ordinator performs her duties effectively.

101. The governing body contains a suitably wide range of expertise, is effective in its work and is very positive and active in its support to the college. Governors show a keen interest in all aspects of college life and participate effectively in curricular as well as in budgetary and planning matters.

102. The college fulfils all its statutory requirements apart from those for the provision of religious education in the sixth form and daily collective worship.

103. The generally positive, purposeful and friendly ethos within the college indicates good progress towards achieving the college's main aim of creating a caring environment, where each individual is of equal worth and where pupils are actively encouraged to develop their potential to the full. The strength of this aspect of school life is well illustrated by the good morale that currently exists in the college at all levels and by the feeling of togetherness that has resulted after a prolonged catalogue of deeply distressing tragic events affecting the college in the last few years.

104. Good programmes for college improvement are in place. These include raising pupils' achievements and their skills in literacy, the further development of systems to improve the assessment of both pupils' and teachers' work, in order to set appropriately challenging targets for pupils and teachers, and improvements to some of the buildings including the science rooms.

105. Following the last inspection, those areas of college planning identified as requiring improvement have all been effectively tackled. The headteacher and senior staff now regularly monitor a wide range of college activities. This process has pinpointed the main areas of strength and weakness and enabled the governing body to target time and resources more effectively when undertaking the annual review of the college development plan.

106. A high priority is given to the monitoring of teaching and learning. Members of the senior management team and also heads of department use lesson observations as a basis for discussions with teachers about teaching skills and individual strengths and weaknesses in teaching methods. Time at staff development days has also been devoted to discussing teaching techniques and effective ways to help children learn. This increased emphasis by senior managers on the importance of teaching has resulted in a general

improvement throughout the school in classroom performance.

107. Within the senior management team there is a shared commitment to improving standards and provision across the college. The results of college and national tests are analysed thoroughly, and discussions are held with heads of department to ensure appropriate targets are set. Furthermore, strategies have been developed to bring about significant improvement in areas such as design and technology and mathematics. Heads of department play an active and effective part in the college's decision-making processes.

108. Development planning at both whole school and department level is thorough, and includes appropriate time-scales and costings. It is a college requirement that department plans include college priorities. These priorities are therefore reflected in the work of each department and this is leading to the successful implementation of initiatives such as assertive discipline. Spending targets are carefully identified at both college and department level through these plans.

109. The governing body is fully involved in planning, setting and monitoring the college budget through the work of the finance committee. Members of this committee work closely with the headteacher in the planning stages and produce a draft budget for approval by the full governing body. There is effective control of expenditure through the college finance policy. The college has a very low level of funds held in reserve, with a major investment in upgrading college provision in information technology an annual priority.

110. Financial administration is detailed and thorough. The college has up-to-date computer systems to increase the reliability of financial monitoring reports. Specific grants received for technology college status, special educational needs, staff training and other national initiatives are all spent as intended. They are effectively used to improve educational provision.

111. The finance committee makes a full evaluation of the quality of existing contracts for services such as cleaning and payroll before these are renewed. Furthermore, tenders are invited whenever the college intends to make a major financial investment, and heads of department seek out best buys when ordering new books and equipment. The finance committee and all college budget holders therefore apply the principles of best value in making budgetary decisions.

112. Learning support assistants have a positive effect on raising standards in classes in the special educational needs area and in the SLD Unit because they are used very efficiently. In mainstream lessons, their use varies in effectiveness. In many classes they are fully involved in planning and supporting the taught curriculum but in a few classes they perform more mundane tasks, which make inefficient use of their skills.

113. Adaptations to the buildings and site, including the recent addition of a purpose-built suite for pupils with severe learning difficulties, mean that no pupils are prevented from accessing the facilities or resources of the college. Overall, staffing and resources allocated for special educational needs are managed soundly in addressing the identified needs of pupils.

114. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers match the demands of the curriculum in most subject areas. There is an inadequate number of laboratory technicians in science. Appropriate support staff are found in other subject areas, including special educational needs support. The two foreign language assistants provide good support. Staff development is effective in promoting teaching and learning. Arrangements

for induction, appraisal and in-service training are very good and helpful evaluations of the provision are undertaken.

115. The college's accommodation, which has recently been enhanced in several areas, is satisfactory overall. The rooms for design and technology, mathematics, music and special educational needs help to create a stimulating environment for work. In a few subjects, rooms are too small for the teaching of large groups and restrict the range of activities in art, English and science. The external rural science laboratories are inadequate. For physical education the outdoor provision is very good, but the showers and changing facilities are poor and have a negative impact on health and hygiene. The work of pupils displayed in classrooms and around the college is good and well used to assist learning.

116. Learning resources are mostly adequate and generally well used to support pupils' learning. There is good provision of resources in areas that have recently been refurbished, notably music, information and communication technology, mathematics and also in special educational needs, where computer technology in particular is in good supply. Other areas have unsatisfactory access to information and communication technology, notably English and art. There is insufficient software to support pupils' computer work in modern foreign languages and no computer weather station to help pupils in their work in geography. The supply of books and the use of audio-visual equipment are at least adequate in most subject areas but in religious education, many books are not up-to-date and there is a shortage of dictionaries in modern foreign languages.

117. The library is a bright, pleasant area with a separate reference room and contains a good range of books, particularly fiction. However, the number of books available for loan is low for a school of this size. The library has a good selection of video and audio-tapes available for loan, and has several computers either with CD-ROMs installed, access to the Internet, or networked to the college system. The latter are well used, but there are insufficient printers. Thorough borrowing records are kept, which give some indication of pupils' reading habits; catalogues are stored electronically on a designated computer. The college also has a well-staffed and equipped central resources room, which supports the curriculum well.

118. Overall, there have been some big steps forward since the last inspection, notably in the enhancement of the accommodation and of information and communication technology resources, although some areas are still in need of improvement. An extra teacher for religious education has been appointed.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

119. The college's development plan has identified all of the issues listed below as areas to be targeted for improvement. In order to raise standards further, the college should:

- (1) build on current initiatives to improve results in GCSE examinations at grades A\*-C and take further action to raise overall standards of achievement in public examinations in the sixth form, especially at A level;  
(See paragraphs 1, 8, 15, 28, 151, 153, 165, 209 and 210.)
- (2) develop further strategies to improve pupils' skills in literacy and information and communication technology, so that pupils make more effective use of these skills to enhance their learning in all subjects;  
(See paragraphs 23, 24, 62, 125, 132, 134, 139, 155, 162, 182, 190, 192, 202, 207, 217 and 235.)
- (3) improve GCSE examination results in art by continuing to monitor the quality of teaching and to plan more thoroughly to meet the examination requirements in the subject;  
(See paragraphs 12, 28, 164, 165 and 168.)
- (4) improve the college's programme for pupils' spiritual development by encouraging all subjects to include opportunities for spiritual awareness in their teaching programmes in order to help pupils develop their creativity and a greater insight into the world's values and beliefs;  
(See paragraphs 72, 76 and 159.)
- (5) ensure that the college complies with:
  - the requirement to provide religious education for all in the sixth form;
  - the requirement for a daily act of collective worship;  
(See paragraphs 61, 64, 76, 243 and 244.)
- (6) as resources permit, improve the accommodation for science, English, physical education and art.  
(See paragraphs 117 and 165.)

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

- make the quality of homework consistently good in all subjects;  
(See paragraphs 26, 60, 69, 158, 168, 206 and 265.)
- ensure that the good assessment data is used effectively in all subjects to help pupils add the maximum value to their previous performances and to enable all departments to produce effective annual assessments of their performances;  
(See paragraphs 93, 160, 192, 206, 238 and 247.)
- maintain efforts to raise levels of attendance from satisfactory to good;  
(See paragraph 36)
- continue to develop and monitor strategies for improving the achievements of boys;  
(See paragraphs 17, 173, 209 and 265.)
- provide a suitable programme of physical education for all sixth form students.  
(See paragraph 237.)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	208
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	62

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	19	57	21	2	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	1140	171
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	107	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	79	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	238	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	44

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	116	115	231

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	81	71
	Girls	89	81	74
	Total	157	162	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (56)	71 (69)	64 (66)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (23)	48 (43)	31 (36)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	74	79	77
	Girls	101	88	84
	Total	175	167	161
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (72)	73 (75)	70 (71)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (30)	49 (46)	45 (36)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

*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	115	97	212

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	106	111
	Girls	51	90	93
	Total	100	196	204
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (46)	93 (94)	96 (98)
	National	46 (45)	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	37.6 (37.9)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	22	37	59

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.3 (12.6)	15.4 (14.3)	14.4 (12.6)	1.7	1.0	1.5 (0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	58
	National	N/A



### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1290
Any other minority ethnic group	21

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	54	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	44
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1013

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	21.9

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	3 236 141
Total expenditure	3 145 417
Expenditure per pupil	2435
Balance brought forward from previous year	90 724
Balance carried forward to next year	183 555

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1311
Number of questionnaires returned	294

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	10	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	56	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	62	10	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	55	18	4	4
The teaching is good.	22	65	5	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	48	15	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	41	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	45	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	52	12	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	53	2	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	57	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	52	5	2	10

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

### **ENGLISH**

121. Pupils' attainment in English is above average at the end of Key Stage 3, and is in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

122. In the tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the number of pupils reaching Level 5 or above last year was above the national average. The number reaching Level 6 and above was well above the national average. Results over the past three years show an upward trend, particularly in the case of girls. Although the standards over this period are a little below those in mathematics and science at the college, they are broadly in line with mathematics and science when results are compared with those in similar schools.

123. The GCSE results for 1999 in English show that pupils are above the national average for grades A\*-C at the end of Key Stage 4. Boys, although they perform less well than girls, achieve results above the national average for boys. The 1999 English results represent an improvement on those of the previous two years, when the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was just below the national figure. In terms of A\*-G grades, the college has had better results than nationally over the last three years, with all those entered passing with at least a grade G in 1999. A different pattern, however, exists for English Literature. For the same three years, the percentage of A\*-G grades has been above the national average, but the percentage of A\*-C grades has fluctuated. There were excellent results in 1998, particularly for girls. The overall pattern for the last three years shows results in line with those nationally for English Literature over this period.

124. In 1999, the percentage passing with A-E grades at A level was close to the national average, but fewer reached grades A-B than nationally. In English Literature, all the candidates in 1999 achieved A-E grades, with nearly half securing A and B grades, a proportion well above the national averages. The pattern has fluctuated over the past few years, but taking the results for the last four years, the number achieving grades A-E in English Language has been above the national average and in English Literature in line with national averages. For grades A-B, the college results are below the national average in English Language but above in English Literature over the same period. Girls perform better in terms of A-B grades, but boys have a higher percentage of A-E grades. Fewer boys have, in the past, taken A levels in English subjects, but there are more in the present sixth form. On the basis of trends in both subjects at GCSE and A levels over the past few years, A level results are at least in line with what would be expected given the results already achieved at GCSE.

125. Standards seen in lessons and in work samples confirm these patterns to a large extent, although pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are not quite at the level achieved in the 1999 tests yet. They are, however, broadly in line with national standards. They have a good knowledge and understanding of texts and good speaking and listening skills. Extended writing is a regular feature of their work. Literacy lessons in Years 7 and 8 are making an impact, so that it is normal to find pupils who can identify parts of speech correctly and use them in creative writing. Some pupils, throughout the key stage, continue to have problems with spelling standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are at least in line with national averages. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have developed a range of relevant language skills and can discuss and write about texts confidently. Lower attaining pupils can do well, when motivated, although poor presentation is too often a feature of their work. However, many can take notes quickly and effectively. Higher attaining pupils show a

good understanding of language and verse forms. A Year 11 class was seen analysing anthology stories in a mature way, discussing aspects of character and plot development with their teacher and analysing their findings in chart form. Those in the sixth form are mostly in line with national averages; they are sometimes above or well above. English Language students plan investigatory work well and produce creative work of a high quality, using information and communication technology skills to good effect. Although they struggle with linguistic theories at first, they are able to use their growing knowledge well. The English Literature students respond well to new texts, and even in Year 12 write very well on, for example, the poems of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. Awareness of contemporary social issues is put to good effect, and where students succeed in going beyond prepared answers, standards are high.

126. The department has made progress since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3, where standards have improved, as shown by the test results. Improvement is less obvious at Key Stage 4, because of the downturn in the 1999 English Literature results, but present standards and the 1999 English results indicate that progress is being made. Standards at A-level are at least being maintained, with improvement in English Literature

in 1999. Students currently studying English courses at A level are achieving higher standards than in previous years.

127. Standards of teaching and learning in English are good. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, which influence the level of tasks set, leading to pupils' higher achievement. Pupils perform well where teachers explain tasks well: this was evident, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth*. In a Year 8 lesson on pre-20th century narratives, the pupils caught the enthusiasm of the teacher. Reading diaries are used to good effect: pupils' progress can be monitored. At Key Stage 4, teaching is again good overall, and at times, very good. Occasionally, pupils make insufficient progress in their learning where tasks given them are too difficult, but the usually high expectations are successful because teachers link the work well to the demands of the examinations, and set appropriate and varied written work, which is marked thoroughly. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the texts studied, and know how to manage their lessons to ensure good learning. A variety of methods prove successful: sometimes direct talking from the teacher leads to enhanced learning because of the teacher's ability to hold the attention of the class such as in a lesson on Hardy's story 'The Withered Arm'. Teaching in the sixth form is also good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which leads to students acquiring better knowledge and understanding. Lessons usually have a clear sense of purpose and direction: a few lack pace, but most consist of a variety of well-planned tasks that help raise student achievement. Teachers have a good rapport with their students, and use praise and criticism effectively. A good example of this was in a Year 13 lesson on language acquisition, in which the students clearly had confidence in their teacher and could be frank about difficulties they were encountering because they trusted the teacher's judgement.

128. Pupils in the college respond well to the good teaching they receive. Positive attitudes are found in Key Stage 3, where pupils collaborate well with their teachers and with each other. Classes were seen in which silent reading was being enjoyed, discussions were being held, and pupils were staying on task in writing activities. There are occasional lapses in concentration, but the overall picture is good. Pupils with special educational needs were seen showing pride in their learning, and most pupils volunteer ideas and answer questions enthusiastically. A similar picture obtains at Key Stage 4, where good concentration, from all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is the norm and there is good co-operation in lessons. Paired work in a Year 10 lesson was particularly

successful because of positive attitudes by pupils: mixed pairs, chosen by the teacher, worked very effectively on a task on language use in texts. In the sixth form, much good group work takes place: students are ready to co-operate on learning activities and to feed back findings to the whole class. Appreciation of each other's work reinforces the positive attitudes, as does a general confidence in the teachers.

129. The department is well led and managed, with responsibilities being shared by an experienced team of teachers who bring a variety of styles and personalities to the subject. They are slightly hampered by the number of rooms available, and by the fact that the rooms are slightly small for the larger teaching groups. Information and communication technology is underdeveloped, because there is insufficient access to the computer rooms during lesson time, but the sessions that are available are used well. Media Studies is a separate subject in the sixth form, enriching the curricular provision. There are some excellent displays around the school: the large posters with examples of pupils' poems printed on them are particularly effective in enhancing the status of the subject in general and poetry in particular. Visits by poets and writers for readings and workshops have been a successful feature of the work done in English. The 'curriculum days', in which a whole day is devoted to English in Year 9, have been a successful innovation, and have contributed to improved test results.

130. Good progress has been made in the subject since the last inspection. Teaching is now always satisfactory or better, leading to satisfactory or better learning. Assessment is more rigorous, and lessons follow more structured schemes of work. Such factors have led to the improvement in standards, particularly at Key Stage 3.

131. The college is making useful progress in improving the teaching of literacy skills. A major contribution is being made through the literacy hours that all Year 7 and Year 8 classes are undertaking. Although next year these will be more fully integrated into English teaching programmes, they are already proving helpful in improving the knowledge, understanding and use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. The regular opportunities for private reading are also beneficial. Pupils with special educational needs receive particular attention in this area: an experimental reading scheme they are following is proving successful in increasing reading ages quite significantly. A summer school is held for pupils joining the college who would benefit from it.

132. There is a cross-curricular policy on the teaching of key words, which are listed by subject in pupils' contact books. In some subjects, these words are reinforced by classroom displays, but the practice is not yet universal and in some cases the words are not related enough to particular topics or modules. A few subjects use writing frames effectively: in history, these are used to aid analytical writing, for instance in an evaluation of Hitler's career. In science, there is scope for more original writing in investigational and research work. Spelling and presentation receive appropriate attention in some subjects, but in several subjects low attainers have inadequate foundational skills.

133. Good speaking and listening skills are found in several subject areas. There are opportunities for extended speaking in music and design technology. Pupils are encouraged to address their peers in science lessons, for instance, in a Year 10 lesson simulating the discussion involved in siting a power station, or in an A-level physics class revising topics together. Effective questioning by teachers assists speaking and learning in physical education, as does the encouragement of correct terminology.

134. Teachers and pupils take literacy very seriously in the literacy hours and in other English lessons, and the impact of this is already being felt. Literacy is not as effectively

promoted or developed in most other subjects to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. In geography, for example, literacy skills are satisfactory overall, but pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 do not sufficiently develop and use these skills in their geography lessons. In modern foreign languages some pupils redraft or correct their work but this is not widespread in the department.

### ***Drama***

135. Standards in drama are good throughout the college. In 1999, more than three-quarters of candidates achieved grades A\*-C in GCSE Drama and Theatre Arts, compared with about two-thirds of candidates nationally. College results in the previous two years were slightly better than in 1999. GCSE results in Drama and Theatre Arts are good compared with pupils' other GCSE examination grades.

136. In A level Theatre Studies, six out of eight candidates, in 1999, gained an A-E grade, three of which were at grades A or B. Allowing for the small size of the group, the proportion of candidates gaining the highest grades is comparable with national performance in drama subjects. The number of candidates for A level in 1999 showed a return to the numbers entered two years previously and the grades obtained have shown an upward trend over the last three years. In relation to pupils' prior attainment, standards achieved at A level are satisfactory.

137. Achievement is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and is good in Key Stage 4. Pupils plan sensibly in pairs and groups in most lessons. Younger pupils convey character and ideas, such as the struggle between conflicting opinions, through sequences of actions in appropriate forms, while older pupils are aware of the sophisticated effects to be achieved by parody and irony, for example, in reworking traditional tales within a modern setting. They are able to combine elements of scripted and improvised drama with dance in GCSE coursework to create powerful effects on an audience. Sixth form students respond to probing questions by giving detailed explanations of how actors' decisions about movement, voice and attitude affect a live performance and its impact on an audience. They are able to analyse texts in detail, weighing the effects of different linguistic and structural choices made by dramatists.

138. Since the previous inspection, drama has maintained its high profile within the college and the community. The quality of teaching has improved overall, particularly in Key Stage 3, where teaching by specialists is consistently good. The subject continues to make a sound contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils through issues and ideas explored in performance and discussion. Drama is a popular subject in the college and pupils are aware of the valuable contribution it makes to the programme of personal and social education.

139. Teaching is good overall. Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils' conduct and response. They set a demanding standard and pace in lessons so that pupils and students look for ways to improve their work, for example, through better blocking of groups or through adding apt details of speech and movement which convey character and feeling. Occasionally, teachers are too quick to ask a series of questions, rather than allow pupils time to formulate and develop complex answers. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are expected to work hard and fast, and respond with enthusiasm and commitment, except where the lesson has insufficient structure. GCSE candidates in Years 10 and 11 show honesty and sensitivity when required to evaluate each other's performances, although they sometimes fail to extend oral comments. Homework is used well to support class activities, and tasks include using computers for research. Because pupils and students enjoy the challenge of drama lessons, and recognise and trust the authority and confidentiality of teachers, their

behaviour is nearly always good and is sometimes very good. They are justly proud of what they achieve. Pupils and students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.

140. Management of the drama department is good. There are detailed schemes of work, teachers are aware of each other's ideas and approaches and share good practice. The budget is skilfully deployed to provide appropriate resources in support of curriculum development, including visits by theatre companies and the staging of an impressive variety of extra-curricular productions. These involve a substantial number of pupils and students and a great deal of organisational responsibility is delegated to them.

141. The staging of a musical has been increased to an annual event produced within the expressive arts area, which enables a large number of the college population to practise and develop their skills in the performing arts.

## **MATHEMATICS**

142. Standards of attainment in mathematics are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3, in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 4 and on completion of the sixth form.

143. In 1999, results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the age of fourteen, were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The trend in results at Key Stage 3 over the last three years is in line with the national trend. Pupils achieve higher standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 than they do in English and science. In GCSE examinations taken in 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average but the proportion gaining grades A\*-G was above the national average. The trend in GCSE results over the years 1997-1999 was broadly in line with the national trend and there was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. Pupils' results in mathematics at GCSE are consistently higher than their results in most other subjects in the college. Results for A level in 1999 were in line with the national average. The rate of improvement in A level results for the college is above the national trend. Students achieve grades at A level at least as good as and often better than those, which would have been expected based upon results at GCSE examinations.

144. Standards at Key Stage 3, as observed in lessons and reflected by national examinations, are above average. Pupils are confident with numerical skills, calculating accurately both mentally and using calculators. They work out money problems mentally but use calculators for square roots and have a good appreciation of when it is beneficial to use a calculator. Pupils show a sound understanding of mathematical concepts, for example, Year 8 pupils appreciate how changes in part of a formula might affect a graph, whilst sixth form students readily understand potential inaccuracies in opinion polls. Mathematical terminology is used accurately and naturally, by the lower attaining pupils, as for example, when pupils in a low set in Year 8 correctly described symmetrical properties of a variety of shapes. Pupils display a positive approach to lessons in mathematics, are attentive and rarely drift off task.

145. Standards at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory. Pupils of high and low attainment make good progress in their GCSE courses. A few pupils of average attainment do not always work hard enough.

146. In the sixth form, standards are above average. The most able mathematicians make the necessary progress to gain the highest grades in A level examinations in both mathematics and further mathematics. Students demonstrate enquiring, mathematical thinking showing an appreciation of the aesthetics of the subject. They benefit from the ability to be able to reflect critically on the work of their peers. Students taking the GCSE course persevere well to improve their work.

147. Since the inspection in 1996 the department has made good progress. There has been an increase in the number and proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* and A at GCSE. The numerical skills of pupils have increased and pupils now perform numerical calculation quickly and accurately. Access to networked computers is better. The schemes of work integrate the usage of information technology into teaching to the benefit of pupils' mathematical understanding. For example, Year 9 pupils solve simultaneous equations graphically on computers and sixth form students use computer simulations to illustrate sampling techniques, in both cases removing the need to spend time on non-mathematical activities. Teaching has improved because lessons are now well structured and make more appropriate demands upon pupils. Homework is set consistently for all pupils and is appropriate to their needs. Pupils with special educational needs enhance their work in mainstream classes through the provision and effective use of learning support assistants. This provision not only assists such pupils but also allows the teacher to address the needs of all pupils in the group more adequately.

148. The quality of teaching of mathematics is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned, addressing the needs of the pupils and including an appropriate variety of activities. For example, the mixed ability Year 7 classes are divided into groups that are set different tasks. The best teaching addresses the needs of all pupils in the group, through careful choice of appropriate strategies and activities, making good use of support staff where available and maintaining a lively pace to the work being undertaken, so that progress is optimised. Pupils who have greatest difficulty understanding mathematics in Key Stage 3 are taught by teachers with specialist skills in teaching pupils with special educational needs. These teachers are highly skilled in developing the mathematical abilities of such pupils. As a result of this their pupils make good progress. Good provision is made for the most able mathematicians. Small groups take further mathematics at A level, which encourages and enables a small number of students to proceed to study mathematics at university. Good links with universities allow gifted pupils to attend classes out of school hours and to participate in a day of problem solving activities, organised by a university.

149. Good use is made of detailed analysis of examination results both to evaluate the work of teachers of mathematics and to underpin the development of work to increase the numbers of pupils gaining higher grades at GCSE. Work is assessed upon completion of the module and the assessment is used to indicate to pupils how they can improve their work. The team of teachers is well led and the aims of the area harmonise with those of the school. The subject co-ordinator undertakes classroom visits to monitor teaching and identifies and disseminates good practice, which helps to remedy any shortcomings. The work of the department is cohesive because the subject co-ordinator regularly samples workbooks to ensure that schemes of work are being followed, to check on pupil progress, to ascertain that appropriate homework is being set and to ensure consistency of marking. The new classrooms for mathematics provide an excellent base for teaching. They feature



good display material combining the work of pupils, commercially produced material of a mathematical nature and details about careers which involve mathematics, which help to stimulate pupils' interest in the subject.

150. Standards of numeracy have improved since the last inspection. Pupils use their generally sound mathematical knowledge satisfactorily to support their studies in a few contexts across the curriculum, as they progress through the school. They perform mental calculations quickly and with accuracy and occasionally apply their numerical skills well, as in musical composition when considering musical form, and in physical education to construct a 'handicap' system for competitions. They calculate intervals of time in French and apply formulae correctly in science. They practise their skills in graphical and other data handling work to satisfactory effect in geography, science, design and technology and in information technology. However, too few subjects have included the development of pupils' skills of numeracy into their programmes of work, with the result that pupils have too few opportunities to practise their skills.

## **SCIENCE**

151. Pupils' attainments in science are generally above the national averages in Key Stages 3 and 4, but vary from above to below in the sixth form. In the national tests at the age of 14, standards were above average and when compared to similar schools, results in the tests were also above average. However, results have declined over the last 2 years. In the last three years, pupils' performances at Key Stage 3 in comparison with national figures are in line with the results they achieve in mathematics, but better than those in English. The teachers' assessments of pupils' attainments are higher than those achieved in the tests, and also above national levels.

152. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are entered for either the double science award, or the alternatives of single science and rural science. Overall, the proportion of the 1999 GCSE examination results in the range A\*-C is above the national average. This figure has risen in each of the last three years. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-G is also consistently above the national figure. The results in 1999 are slightly above expectations based on the results these pupils achieved in their national tests at the age of 14. Pupils achieve better results in science than in their other subjects.

153. The number of sixth form students taking A level science subjects has been relatively low in the last three years, so statistical comparisons are difficult and unreliable. However, in total the proportion of students obtaining a pass grade has been broadly in line with national figures. There have been few A or B grades. In 1999, all eleven students entered obtained a pass, two students achieved grade B, but there were no A grades. College records show that in general, students obtain the grades expected based on their results at GCSE.

154. In work seen during the inspection, standards were generally above national expectations, particularly at Key Stage 4. Pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work in books and folders. At Key Stage 3, a high standard of work was seen in lessons where average attaining pupils investigated the difference between force and pressure, higher attaining pupils observed differences in the reactivity of the alkali metals, and a lower attaining group considered the difference between mass and weight. At Key Stage 4, lessons on the structure of the lungs, circulation of the blood, and the relationship between force, mass, and acceleration all considerably enhance the pupils' levels of understanding. In the sixth form, above average work is produced in all three subjects; in biology, students set up practical tests to study transport in plants, and in chemistry they discuss entropy

changes. In physics, Year 13 students give effective presentations to their peers of answers to A level questions, and in Year 12 they consider in depth the theory of simple harmonic motion. Pupils' standards are comparable in each of the National Curriculum attainment targets; their skills in completing longer term scientific investigations are increasing due to changes in teaching style in Key Stage 3. These encourage them to play a bigger part in the planning of their work before they carry out and then evaluate scientific tests; they therefore develop the habit of thinking more carefully about the scientific processes involved in their work.

155. Pupils' numeracy skills are generally good in science. In Key Stage 3, they show confidence in plotting graphs, and in their interpretation of results. They use formulae more frequently in Key Stage 4 and by the sixth form have become confident in the use of standard form. The rearrangement of formulae sometimes causes difficulty and at times they resort to using a calculator too readily. The standard of literacy is satisfactory; the department is increasing the use of keywords, there are examples of extended writing when undertaking research, and pupils are often encouraged to make presentations to the class. There is little evidence of the use of information technology in science lessons, though the department has plans to increase this.

156. On entry to the college, the attainment of the most recent intake was above the national average. Pupils at all levels of prior attainment make good progress in each key stage. The pace of learning is less rigorous in Year 7, however, where teachers do not always ensure that there is a sustained challenge for higher attaining pupils. By Year 9, pupils work confidently in practical lessons, for instance in setting up tests to investigate how the rate of oxygen production by pond weed is affected by the intensity of the light. They make a good contribution to the class discussion about whether any firm conclusion can be drawn from the resultant graph. By the end of Year 11, pupils at all levels of attainment are well prepared for their GCSE examination; in class, most pupils continue to work hard, but a minority indulge in off-task chatter when involved in practical and written work. In the sixth form, there is often a wide range of attainment in each A level class; all students work very hard in lessons, generally contribute well to discussions, and make the best use of their opportunities. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the work of all classes. They make good progress throughout the college, as seen for example, in a Year 10 set studying the GCSE single award course, where 12 pupils on the register of special educational needs are currently working towards target grades ranging from grade C to F. The help provided for pupils with special educational needs by learning support assistants is appreciated by pupils and teachers and is effective. This contributes to the pupils' sense of achievement and they continue to work with confidence throughout the college.

157. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work, and behave well. They are able to discuss their work maturely. Their approach to their work is a significant factor in the success they achieve. They co-operate well when working in groups, which are frequently of mixed gender. They generally listen carefully to their teacher and to one another. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 lesson on the siting of power stations. This involved splitting the class into a number of groups, each of which prepared a presentation on their preferred solution.

158. Teaching is good at all key stages, and especially at Key Stage 4. All teaching is at least satisfactory, and in over three quarters of lessons it is good or very good. The planning of lessons is particularly good; this leads to a purposeful start to lessons and pace throughout. In most lessons, there is a variety of tasks for pupils to complete. The best lessons are broken down into smaller sections of time, with clear targets for pupils within each section. Teaching methods encourage pupils to participate and most classes contain an element of practical work to add interest and to assist pupils' understanding. The management of pupils is very good; teachers concentrate on the positive, and use praise wherever possible. There is a feeling of mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Full use is made of the time available in each lesson and there is often a summary of the work covered to reinforce learning. The day-to-day marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall, with most teachers marking work regularly and using the school policy for the grading of work. Homework tasks are routine and often lack challenge and interest.

159. The curriculum is well planned, with the regular review of schemes of work ensuring that good learning opportunities are provided for pupils. All pupils have the opportunity to obtain a science qualification at the age of 16. Additional lessons are provided in the run up to examinations and are successful in improving pupils' performances and their examination techniques. While the statutory content of the national curriculum is covered, the school science curriculum does not cover all the recommendations for the integration of information technology. Members of the department are positive about the development of additional exercises in this important area. There are particularly good links with feeder primary schools, which help to provide continuity from Year 6 to Year 7. The teaching of science makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For instance, during the week of the inspection, many pupils witnessed the hatching of chicken eggs in the school incubator. There are occasions, however, when the opportunity is missed to encourage pupils to ponder the miracles of nature.

160. The department has developed a series of standardised tests to monitor the work of all pupils in each year group. Results of these tests are recorded along with the results of national tests at the ends of key stages. These results are useful in ensuring that each pupil continues to make good progress. They are not yet used as a basis for evaluating the annual performance of the department.

161. The leadership and management of this large department by the area co-ordinator are good. There is effective support from the heads of subject and other teachers with specific management responsibilities. There is a clear commitment by all staff to improving provision and standards. The monitoring of teaching has helped to identify staff training needs and improve standards, but insufficient time is allowed in department meetings for the discussion of teaching skills. The department development plan is clearly linked to college priorities, and includes realistic targets for the coming year.

162. Teachers are well qualified and sufficient in number. There are, however, too few technician hours; this places undue pressure on the senior technician and also on teaching staff. This inevitably has an impact on standards. Accommodation overall is unsatisfactory; some laboratories are old, some are too small, and most could do with a facelift. Plans are well advanced to improve current provision. Resources have improved, particularly since Technology College status was confirmed, but there is still a shortage of additional computer hardware and software. The supply of textbooks has also improved. Library provision is adequate and a special section is being introduced for slower readers.

163. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. However, some key issues still remain and go forward as priorities in this report. Overall standards have improved, especially in GCSE results, and girls are achieving broadly in line with boys. The development of pupils' investigational skills has also improved. There is an increasing stress on pupil literacy, with keywords more clearly displayed in laboratories. Pupil behaviour has also improved and pupil assessments are closely linked to National Curriculum levels. There are areas, however, where relatively little progress has been made. There is still an urgent need to increase technician time. The rate of development of the inclusion of information technology in the science curriculum is unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the quality of A level results is disappointing, as is the number of girls taking A level physics and chemistry. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the overall numbers of students in the sixth form studying science subjects. The area co-ordinator is aware of the priorities that remain to be tackled and the department is producing plans to overcome the deficiencies.

## **ART**

164. Standards in art are lower than at the time of the previous inspection, are below average throughout the school and are now not high enough.

165. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards achieved are below average. In 1999, teachers' assessment of pupils' standards indicated under achievement and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard was well below the national average. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE examination results in art for the past three years have been significantly below the national average. Similarly, in the sixth form, A-level results have been below the national average for the past three years. Pupils' GCSE results in art are significantly lower than their average grades in other subjects. Several factors have contributed to the decline in standards over a period of time and include accommodation inappropriate in size for large classes and a decreasing profile for art in the school. These have resulted in some lack of identity and pride in art and a lack of rigour and vitality in the teaching. There has also been an impoverishment of the art curriculum over several years. The present curriculum, although sufficient to meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, is lacking breadth, variety and enriching elements.

166. Since the last inspection, some of the issues identified still remain to be addressed. Shortage of time was judged then to be adversely affecting the quality of learning and standards of achievement. In this current inspection, the shortage of time for art is not the problem it was then, but currently some Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 classes are large, with over 30 pupils. The result, when these large classes occur, is a restriction on the type of work that can be undertaken and a limited range of art experiences for pupils. To alleviate the problem of overcrowding when classes are large, some pupils are required to work in the corridor outside the art studio. This has a negative impact on the quality of learning and standards achieved.

167. The work of the art department has been enhanced by following the action plan drawn up after a recent monitoring exercise, carried out for the college by the local education authority in an attempt to raise standards. During the inspection, many good features were observed in the teaching, in pupils' learning and in the quality of work they produced. The current quality of work is higher than that reflected in past examination performances.

168. At Key Stage 3, standards of pupils' work seen in lessons and in their portfolios are broadly average. At Key Stage 4, standards of pupils' work seen are average overall and some work is above average. In the sixth form, standards of work are average and at least in line with students' prior attainments. At all key stages, pupils demonstrate a good ability in drawing from observation. They are adept at using their observed drawings as starting points for abstractions into designs to form painted composition, simple prints, collage, three-dimensional construction in card or ceramics. Although they have sketchbooks in which to record their ideas and to develop their own visual awareness of art, sketchbooks are under used as a means of pupils developing their visual study skills. Homework lacks regularity and rigour and does not engender in pupils, from the beginning of Year 7, a visual study habit and a sense of responsibility for their own learning. The lack of regular homework to encourage personal development from the beginning of Key Stage 3, adversely affects pupils' subsequent achievement at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. From Key Stage 4, examination requirements ensure that homework is set and pupils more regularly complete it.

169. Overall, the quality of teaching is now good, although there is sometimes a lack of experimentation so that the emphasis is on art making activities, most frequently with pupils referring to art books on other artists as starting points. This prevents pupils developing their own ideas through working with original materials. Pupils make good progress within the limits of the tasks set them. Pupils with special educational needs receive good in-class support and make at least satisfactory progress.

170. The size of art accommodation is too small when classes contain upwards of thirty pupils.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

171. Standards of attainment in design and technology are above average throughout the college.

172. The proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected level 5 in teachers' assessments of their work at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above average. Levels of achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 in terms of A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations are above the national average and show a rising trend.

173. At both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, the performance of girls is better than that of boys. In 1999, pupils gained better GCSE examination results in design and technology than in most of their other subjects. Results at A-level are above the national average.

174. Evaluation of pupils' work during the inspection shows that achievement at Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations and above average at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The standard and quality of pupils' work are consistently good in all the materials areas of design and technology. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have experienced a range of activities in graphics, resistant materials, electronics, food technology and textiles technology. They understand the relationship of designing to making.

175. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils make sensible choices in their use of materials and have a good understanding of the characteristics of materials for specific functions. GCSE coursework shows a good standard and quality of presentation achieved by the majority. In textile technology and in resistant materials, pupils make ranges of products that are both functionally and aesthetically effective. In food technology, pupils have an

appropriate understanding of what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet and have a good knowledge of the manufacture of food products.

176. Pupils in Key Stage 4 following courses in child development and catering are making at least satisfactory progress.

177. In the sixth form, students produce a good quality of work in a range of materials. Their coursework projects are very good and show a maturity and depth of research. Many students use computers to present their work neatly and show good skills in computer aided design and computer aided manufacture. Students' designing skills are equally well developed as their skills in making. Relative to students' prior attainment, progress is good.

178. Standards and teaching have improved since the last inspection and all the issues identified in the last report have been successfully addressed. The current good teaching is a positive contributory factor to pupils' good learning across all key stages. Pupils' own good attitudes to the subject also assist their progress in the subject.

179. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All teachers are specialists and have good subject knowledge; they have a good understanding of pupils' current attainment and their potential for improved attainment. Teachers plan their lessons well, identifying learning objectives. They give clear, easily understood instructions, show examples of what is required and give good demonstrations. They time their inputs well with regard to pupils' concentration spans and the nature of the activity. They use praise well and have a non-confrontational way of controlling pupils, using interesting lesson content as the best method of controlling pupils. Teachers set appropriately challenging work calculated to stretch pupils and to maximise their progression. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good in-class support and make at least satisfactory progress. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and confirm to pupils how well they are doing, setting targets for future development. This is a very effective department that is gaining in strength.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

180. GCSE A\*-C grades results have improved and are now above average. Boys have performed increasingly well in recent years and are above the national average and they do almost as well as girls. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the college geography results have improved from below to above the average. More pupils now attain the higher grades. Recent A\*-G results have been consistently above the national position. Advanced level results overall, despite some variations, have been close to the national average.

181. Most pupils achieve levels that are broadly in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 3 but above it by the end of Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, work produced is close to the national average.

182. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have sound geographical skills and an appropriate vocabulary in the subject, but key words need emphasising more. Most use and interpret maps well and have a satisfactory understanding of spatial and environmental issues and a good knowledge of world development. Pupils have insufficient practice in graphical representation of statistical data and presentation.

183. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils competently explain a range of physical and human processes, for example, river and glacial action and urban land use models. They also apply a variety of geographical skills to their work. They also produce some high quality independent study project work based on individual fieldwork.

184. In the sixth form, pupils generally organise themselves well and develop a good grasp of geographical concepts in a variety of contexts.

185. Pupils with special educational needs work well, aided by some very good teaching for their needs at Key Stage 4, and produce work which is above that normally expected for their attainment level: elsewhere it is satisfactory. Useful knowledge and understanding are gained of social and cultural issues through studies of Brazil and USA.

186. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and most display a real interest and enjoyment in their work. Behaviour is always good and often very good. Pupils develop good relationships with their teachers and in many lessons particularly at Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form a real rapport is evident. Pupils relate very well to each other, are courteous and trustworthy when working in groups, as evidenced in a lesson when using information technology on enquiry activities in the computer base. Pupils' individual responses to questions are good being often well developed and analytical but in many lessons a greater class response needs nurturing.

187. The previous inspection report identified noticeable weaknesses in teaching and learning. Issues raised have been acted upon positively and successfully. An emphasis has been placed on developing enquiry skills each year in Key Stage 3. Boys' performance has been investigated and numerous positive adjustments made which have already been successful in improving standards. Extended writing has been tackled by setting more open-ended tasks and ensuring more opportunities for able pupils, for example, in Year 9 when they draw on appropriate GCSE articles. Homework is now more purposeful and relevant. The subject development plan still lacks a longer term subject context and is not fully costed as an operational plan, but monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department are very good.

188. Teaching is good overall and there are some examples of very good teaching. It is good at all key stages and is strength of the department. Teachers are very committed and supportive, relate positively to pupils and classroom management and control are very good.

189. The best teaching is effective because it has clear and manageable aims which are shared with pupils and tested at the end of the lesson to ensure that learning is effective; the detailed and imaginative planning encourages interest and offers a variety of suitable learning opportunities; there is good pace, and the lesson is presented in a challenging way with high expectation of achievement. In these lessons staff have a secure knowledge of the subject matter taught and presentation is lively and encourages genuine enjoyment of the subject thereby promoting learning. Teaching is well structured and focused and a range of materials are used including local maps of the Launceston area, diagrams, hydrographs and fieldwork surveys of Plymouth's Central Business District which all have a positive impact on the quality of learning.

190. Occasionally, learning is not sufficiently enhanced by the consolidation and re-inforcement of the main teaching points visually on the board. Learning is also slightly hindered through lack of a large standing world map in each specialist classroom to ensure that pupils acquire a good understanding of geographical patterns and place. Teachers do

not always match pupils' learning needs in selecting materials and activities for lessons, particularly for low attainers. Literacy skills are satisfactorily developed overall although there is insufficient rigour in developing and using these basic skills in Years 7 and 8. For example, pupils rarely improve their reading skills through reading geographical texts aloud and hearing others read nor do they have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills of extended writing early in Key Stage 3.

191. Teaching in the sixth form is good and work is challenging and pitched at the appropriate level, with some challenging materials used. Examination results do not fully reflect this good teaching, partly because pupils' study skills are not yet fully developed in respect of the examination revision skills programme.

192. Progress in learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils are not always fully involved in evaluating their own work and setting targets to sustain progress. Fieldwork undertaken at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form greatly enriches studying; the best work is of very good quality. However, it is very inadequate at Key Stage 3 where pupils need to experience at first hand the main features of the local area in Year 7 and study a physical environment in some detail in Year 9. Information technology has been significantly developed since the last inspection and the computer suite is effectively used. Information technology skills have been appropriately linked with curriculum themes but are not yet developed as a coherent programme over Key Stages 3 and 4.

193. The department is very competently and effectively led. Leadership ensures clear direction for the work and development of the department and makes a strong contribution to the improving standards evident. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are thorough and have a positive impact on pupils' standards. Accommodation is in specialist rooms and suited which allows for effective links between staff and engenders a strong team spirit. Wall displays provide an active learning environment in classes but do not currently extend to the adjacent corridor to promote the subject. Resources are generally good but there are some shortages in resources that limit progress including a large standing world display map, overhead projection and video monitor to enhance visual learning in each specialist teaching room, a computerised weather station and a fieldwork budget. This is a strong department, professionally competent, which is progressing well and has a good capacity to continue to improve and meet future challenges.

## **HISTORY**

194. GCSE results at grades A\* to C have improved considerably over the last three years, and in 1999 were well above the national average and better than those in other subjects in the college. Results at grades A\* to G have also been above national averages. A-level results at grades A and B have also improved and in 1999 were above the national average. However, results at grades A to F were below national averages.

195. Attainment in work seen towards the end of Key Stage 3 is at the nationally expected level. Pupils have a sound and often good knowledge of the major events and changes in the periods they have been studying. Year 9 pupils know about the Industrial Revolution and have some understanding of its impact on working conditions. Pupils work well with sources and are beginning to understand why events and situations are interpreted in different ways. They research and organise information successfully, and higher attaining pupils produce some well structured, persuasive writing. Overall, pupils achieve well during Key Stage 3



and make good progress. Attitudes to the subject are generally positive and standards of behaviour are good.

196. Overall attainment in work seen at Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Pupils are learning the content of the GCSE course effectively, and have a good understanding of some of the underlying issues, for example, the USSR's control over Eastern Europe after the Second World War. Pupils are also able to make good links between different parts of the course. In the sixth form, attainment in the Year 13 group is above the national average. Students have a good grasp of the British and European history they have been studying at A level and can analyse successfully key themes in topics such as the events and impact of the First World War. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in history at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and the overall attitudes of those taking the subject at GCSE and A level are good.

197. Since the last report, standards have improved well both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The quality of teaching has become more consistent, especially in the assessment of pupils' work. The history department development plan now identifies appropriate priorities and methods for achieving them.

198. The overall quality of teaching and of pupils' learning is good. In some lessons it is very good and it is never less than satisfactory. Good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for history are well used to extend pupils' understanding. Planning is usually thorough, although on a few occasions it does not fully cater for the needs of all pupils and this slows down the rate at which they learn. Teaching methods are varied and well judged. The effective use of video material on the Great Plague with a Year 8 class stimulated pupils' interest and enhanced their learning. Skilful questioning which consolidates and extends pupils' understanding is a strength of teaching in the department. Lively questioning enabled

Year 10 pupils to develop a good understanding of American involvement in the Vietnam War. Pupils are well managed, and they are able to get on with their work and make progress. Lessons are usually well paced, although slow starts to a few lessons reduce the initial impact of the teaching. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is good and is well used to help pupils improve their work. Homework is set regularly and is well integrated with ongoing classwork.

199. Effective leadership and regular monitoring of teaching have contributed to improved standards. Good assessment and recording procedures help to promote pupils' attainment and progress. The use of information technology in history is still at an early stage, which means that there are some missed opportunities for raising standards further in the subject.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

200. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average when compared to national standards. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels over the last three years. Lesson observations confirm this pattern. Pupils become more confident and capable in their use of information technology as they move through Key Stage 3. They are particularly adept at manipulating files and folders in a 'Windows' environment. They use the Internet as a regular part of their work. They are familiar with software such as Word, Publisher, Paint, Pinpoint and Excel. For example, pupils in Year 8 use and select valid information from a database, then use appropriate software to graph information in various ways. They use 'wizards' with confidence. In Year 9, pupils produce a project on 'Romeo and Juliet' using information

technology that incorporates word-processing, design and the use of spreadsheets to monitor theoretical costs.

201. GNVQ Part 1 information technology is offered to examination level in Key Stage 4 and pupils have not yet completed the course. Lesson observations show average levels of attainment. Pupils are confident users of information technology. For example, pupils understand the importance of sequences when using information technology to control equipment such as traffic lights. They are able to model these through the use of a 'smart box' and 'logicator' software.

202. Other pupils in Key Stage 4 have access to information technology through the subjects they take. There is variable provision here. In subjects such as English, mathematics, design technology, geography and art the provision of information technology, as a means of improving pupils' learning is well developed. However, attempts to 'map' pupils' entitlement through Key Stage 4 in order to ensure that all pupils receive the same experiences are unsatisfactory.

203. Standards of attainment in the sixth form information technology courses are above average. Pupils follow A/S level in computing and a GNVQ Intermediate course in information technology. Results in 1999 showed that all GNVQ students achieved the pass level, with one-third attaining merits or distinctions. Lesson observations indicate a similar pattern for the current year. The A level course has yet to be completed by the first cohort. Lesson observations and examination of students' work indicates a broad range of attainment with a considerable number of students on line to attain high grades.

204. The provision, and use of, information technology since the last inspection has improved significantly. The National Curriculum requirements are now met although further development needs to be made in the provision of data logging facilities. The number and quality of computers has been greatly increased, so that pupils can access them in several areas of the school. A very good school Intranet has been developed which provides resources, and Internet links, specific to courses offered in most of the subjects. Pupils throughout the school are confident users of the Internet and many use E-mail to transfer work to and from home. There is a strategic plan for the further development of information technology that will improve the facilities still further. Assessment strategies are in place in Key Stage 3 that are sufficient to provide National Curriculum levels at the end of the key stage. The standard of technical support is good. There is widespread use of information technology in many, but not all subjects. The college is ensuring that all staff will receive training in information technology. Appropriately demanding tasks are now set for pupils.

205. Teaching and learning at both key stages and in the sixth form are good. The strengths of the teaching are considerable. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to amplify points with pertinent examples. They are enthusiastic about the subject and give time willingly to after school and lunchtime information technology sessions. They give instructions clearly and use methods appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Teachers control their classes well in a firm but friendly manner. This is particularly significant in Key Stage 3, where pupils have to share computers in congested rooms. No inappropriate behaviour was seen under such conditions. When pupils are working on the computers, the teachers continuously support and advise. In most lessons teachers have high expectations of the pupils, this being especially noticeable in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where the emphasis is firmly on achievement for the individual pupil. Planning is good both for individual lessons and in ensuring that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met.

206. The best lessons have extension work for those who progress more quickly. Marking is thorough and gives pointers on the steps pupils should take to improve their work. This is particularly noticeable in the sixth form. Praise and encouragement are widely used. The best lessons move the pupils on at pace and include discussion of the main learning points at the end of the lesson. Teachers emphasise the importance of reading and understanding instructions in order to ensure the correct response to examination questions and specific tasks in Key Stage 3. They ensure that technical terms are fully explained. Homework is set regularly for Key Stage 4 and sixth form examination classes but is not provided for those in Key Stage 3. The department follows the school assessment procedures but these are not related to National Curriculum standards until the end of Key Stage 3. As a result for most of Key Stage 3, pupils are unaware of their progress in relation to national standards and how they can improve their performance.

207. Other factors that make an impact on the standards achieved by pupils include the good management of the subject. A particular strength is the development of a team approach to the development of information technology that is committed to high standards in the subject. The schemes of work are thorough and useful working documents. There is a clear structure for future development linked to the college development plan. Teaching is monitored as part of the college's focus on teaching and learning. A further factor is the attitude of the pupils who are invariably interested in the subject and apply themselves willingly to their work. This is especially significant in the sixth form classes. When having to share computers, pupils work together in a mature, co-operative manner. The computer technicians are a particular strength as their unobtrusive assistance enables the teachers to concentrate on the pupils' learning when technical problems occur. However, all pupils in Key Stage 3 have to share computers. This inhibits the progress that individuals make, as they are unable to proceed at their own pace, and has a negative impact on standards of attainment.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

208. Standards since the previous inspection have improved and are broadly average throughout the college.

209. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 in French, with more pupils having been entered, rose from the previous year, but the results were just below the national average. The attainment of girls was in line with the national average and was an improvement on 1998. The attainment of boys has improved over the last three years, but it is still below the national average. Pupils do not perform as well in French as in many other subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in Spanish was above the national average, for both boys and girls, and was an improvement on 1998. The attainment of boys has improved over the last three years. However, girls have out-performed boys in each language at grades A\* to C over the same period. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to G was in line with the national average in French and above in Spanish.

210. At A level examinations in 1999, the three candidates in French all gained a pass, one being at a high grade. The results in Spanish were below the school's expectations, and only one of the three candidates gained a pass. Standards seen during the inspection for a larger class of this year's Year 13 were much higher.

211. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is average in both French and Spanish. Understanding is good because of the consistent use of the foreign language by teachers in the classroom and because listening exercises with cassette are part of most lesson plans. Oracy and pronunciation are sound. Pupils in a Year 7 mixed ability Spanish class spoke well describing well-known personalities on flash cards. Year 9 pupils in a French class participated in a role-play, answering questions about leisure activities and giving opinions quite confidently. Two girls in the top Spanish set asked each other questions about Mexico and answered them well. The scrutiny of pupils' written work in their exercise books showed that they are well used to writing, with obvious progression through the topics, and are acquiring relevant constructions and tenses. Pupils have a good knowledge of topic

vocabulary, and most pupils in Year 9 can use the past and immediate future tenses in each language. Many books are very well illustrated.

212. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is average in French and above average in Spanish. Understanding is generally good. In two lessons, pupils were taught listening techniques for particular sounds in French, and to identify the correct words from similar-sounding pairs in Spanish. Dictations are also used to develop accuracy in higher-attaining sets. Oral skills are developed at appropriate levels. Lower attainers in a Year 10 French lesson on parts of the body, described monsters for their partner to draw. Higher to average attainers in Year 11 developed their skills in pair work and in question and answer session with the teacher to talk about a job in a clothing shop, later changing to a past tense. Writing skills are again well developed, with pupils displaying a good knowledge of topic vocabulary and of constructions and tenses with varying accuracy. Set phrases are introduced in each language to help pupils raise the standard of their written work. Pupils are prepared well for their coursework assignments.

213. Students' attainment by the end of the sixth form is average in French and above average in Spanish, where there are more candidates. Two pupils in French in Year 13 developed their communication skills by describing a painting by Cezanne to each other, whilst the other had to draw it. The results were close to the original, but not as colourful! Students in the Spanish class consolidated and developed their knowledge of tenses in exercises, both oral and written, dealing with the sequence of tenses in conditional sentences. One piece of coursework seen showed writing of a very high standard, in presenting a very detailed analysis of relationships within the household in Lorca's *La Casa de Bernada Alba*.

214. Pupils' attitudes to work and behaviour in class are good or very good at all three key stages. Some of this is the result of teachers' good classroom management, but generally response is good. Pupils apply themselves well to their tasks, and they usually move from one task to the next with little fuss or talking. They work co-operatively in pairs or groups, and relationships are good. Lower attainers in a Year 9 Spanish class co-operated in an excellent manner with the teacher and derived much pleasure from their lesson.

215. Teaching is a strength of the department. The quality of teaching is good at all three key stages; four lessons were judged to be very good and one excellent. Pupils' learning and progress at all three key stages are good. Teachers' subject knowledge in both languages is very good; four of them are native French speakers. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is good, particularly at Key Stage 3, because of the consistent use of the foreign language by the teachers in the classroom. Teachers' planning ensures that lessons have a variety of tasks and skills, to make lessons interesting and to make the best

use of the 60-minute lesson. Lower attainers in a Year 9 Spanish class worked most productively throughout the lesson and enjoyed their learning as a result of the teacher's careful planning and different strategies to interest and motivate the pupils. Most lessons provide pupils with the opportunity to speak, either to the teacher or to a partner in pair work. Many teachers share the lesson's objectives with the class at the outset, so that pupils know what they are expected to have learnt by the end of the lesson. Previous work on vocabulary, grammatical constructions and tenses is revised and consolidated in most lessons. Teachers make good use of the overhead projector, flash cards, chorus work and worksheets to assist them in this task. Teachers have high expectations of their classes. Higher attaining pupils are well challenged; they are expected to work at a good pace and be productive. In most cases the response is good, particularly where the teacher is enthusiastic. Teachers challenge pupils at all key stages with numeracy, and reference to dates, times, higher numerals and numbers used in statistics. Regular vocabulary tests in many lessons are a challenge to past work. Classroom control of pupils is good or very good. A year 10 Spanish class of lower attainers made good progress because they were kept well on task. Relationships are good. Homework is set regularly and written work is corrected well. Some pupils redraft or correct their work, but it is not standard practice.

216. Progress by pupils with special educational needs is good. Support given to pupils in class is good. Pupils preparing for the Certificate of Achievement in Year 11 are working well and making good progress.

217. Management of the department is very good. Monitoring is very effective. The area co-ordinator is well supported by keen and committed colleagues. They are working hard to minimise the disruption caused by staff illness in the past, and which is still affecting the department. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. The one issue still outstanding is the full implementation into the syllabus of information technology.

## **MUSIC**

218. Standards in music have improved since the last inspection and are above the national average throughout the college.

219. By the age of fourteen, pupils' standards are above the national average. In 1999, teachers' assessments for pupils' attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3 showed that half the pupils were working at least at the expected level. This is confirmed by evidence from lessons observed during the inspection. Pupils understand the concept of music as organised sound, and demonstrate this by composing in a variety of musical styles and by their recognition of pulse, pitch and timbre in the music they hear. Year 9 pupils are working on a composition using a single motif, developing this through inversion and transposition into a ternary form piece. All pupils achieve well throughout the key stage. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs make a valuable contribution to group performance and composition, having been given a restricted range of targets and techniques to work with, to ensure success. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well and are well catered for through the instrumental provision and the challenging nature of composition projects.

220. Pupils behave well and are eager to come to lessons, readily organising themselves into groups for practical work. Their ability to work unsupervised, often out of sight and earshot of the teacher, contributes strongly to the high quality of their learning. In Year 8, working on timbre, one group produced a complex polyphonic piece, mixing instrumental colours very effectively to create atmosphere. Efforts are enhanced by the acquisition, since the previous inspection, of a wide range of high quality acoustic and electronic

instruments including African drums, congas and keyboards, some with MIDI interface. Pupils particularly enjoy playing 'Caroline's Piano', bought in her memory with an express wish that all pupils should have the opportunity to play it. Most pupils work competently with music software, which they use with confidence to improve and complete compositions in this Key Stage and throughout the rest of the college.

221. Although the number of pupils taking GCSE over the last three years has been too small to make reliable comparisons, pupils' results have been well above the national average and above the college average level in other subjects. There is clear progression from Key Stage 3 in the development of composition technique, and the high standard achieved reflects the quality of performance of the pupils. The full range of ability is represented and everyone supported and encouraged to do their best and achieve well. Pupils with little formal instrumental teaching are enabled to play a full part in ensembles and achieve well through playing in the class steel band. Pupils who have already reached a very high standard of performance are producing compositions that match this. Understanding of musical concepts tested in the listening component is consistent with performance and composition for this significant minority of pupils. A considerable amount of time is spent by pupils out of lessons pursuing music through private practice and by taking part in ensembles in the town and county.

222. Over the past few years only a few students have chosen to study Advanced level music, so that it has been an occasional subject in the sixth form. Music is now more firmly established, with growing numbers of students, especially since the introduction of music technology. Standards are high, several students performing at professional level. Building on the rigorous approach to the teaching of composition begun in Year 7, one student has enjoyed considerable success in local competitions and has been awarded a scholarship to study composition at the Royal College of Music. There is a clear understanding of musical history, where students have enquiring minds and considered opinions. The ability to communicate this understanding, through well-structured essays, is a strength of their work. The students have a firm command of the range of technological equipment at their disposal, editing and manipulating data in composition and recording. The sixth form students help to make the music department a vibrant place and their presence is an asset both in raising standards and through their willingness to help younger pupils with their work.

223. Teaching overall is good. Although a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons were seen, equally there are also touches of excellence. All members of the department and visiting teachers display excellent musical ability and knowledge which inspires the pupils and students and encourages them to aim high themselves. Lessons are very well planned with clear and shared objectives, constantly adjusted in the light of pupils' response. Long-term planning ensures that pupils and students enjoy diverse learning opportunities such as improvisation and technical vocabulary, while experiencing a wide cultural diet, from Gamelan music of Indonesia to Cornish folk music. Through this, pupils develop a deeper understanding of the nature of music and the common threads. This was particularly apparent in a sixth form lesson, which considered the influences on twentieth-century musical development. Much is expected of pupils in their standard of work and behaviour. The trust placed in them is justified, as can be seen by the commitment they show through the care they take of the instruments and accommodation. Excellent preparation of resources and choice of teaching methods mean that lessons flow smoothly and pupils are fully in tune with the teacher, as in a Year 9 lesson on motifs in music. Where teaching does not gauge pupils' response and resolve difficulties early on pupils make unsatisfactory progress. The best use of time is not always made in the sixth form.

224. Since the previous inspection, the department has been housed in new accommodation, which is spacious and well equipped with an exciting range of instruments and technology. This has created a good learning environment and has helped raise standards in the subject. Enthusiastic and energetic leadership means that the policy to establish and raise standards in examinations at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is already having an effect.

225. Only a small percentage of pupils enhance their musical attainment through active participation, on a regular basis, in extra-curricular activities on offer in music. However, the standards of music are very high in these activities. Through the efforts of the head of department, the choir and instrumental groups are much in demand to play in school and in the town.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

226. Overall, standards in physical education are in line with national averages.

227. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, show that the proportion of pupils achieving at or beyond age-related national expectations was just above the national average. The great majority of the current Year 9 pupils are working at levels expected of pupils of this age. There are no significant differences in relation to boys and girls. In lessons, most 14 year-olds are working at levels expected of pupils of this age in games such as hockey and rounders. In the latter, for example, girls have a secure knowledge of rules and know the four techniques of bowling. There is room for improvement in the accuracy of their throwing. In hockey boys successfully use a range of passes including the hit, push and slap in both drills and small-sided games. All pupils understand the need to practise in order to improve their individual and team skills and techniques. They have a good understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up and take responsibility for leading it.

228. In Key Stage 4, pupils have the option to follow the GCSE physical education course. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving A\*–C grades in the GCSE examinations was above the national average and was an improvement on the first cohort's results in the previous year. The small number of girls taking the course does not make for meaningful gender comparisons.

229. In lessons in Key Stage 4, the majority of sixteen year-olds attain national expectations in racquet games such as badminton and table tennis. In both these activities, pupils use a range of shots in both singles and doubles play and have a secure grasp of the rules and conventions of play. In their GCSE course, pupils achieve well in relation to syllabus requirements. They have good knowledge of theory and of practical activities, such as badminton and basketball where the majority is achieving higher range assessment grades. This in turn is having a positive impact on overall standards of attainment in the course that all pupils follow.

230. The first group of students to study the A level course for physical education is preparing well for the examination this year. In lessons, their individually researched presentations of aspects of principles of training are indicative of their secure knowledge and understanding of the syllabus requirements. Their grasp and use of appropriate terminology is good.

231. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The curriculum for the course that all pupils follow in Key Stages 3 and 4 now meets fully the requirements of the National Curriculum. Both GCSE and GCE Advanced physical education have been introduced, thus raising the profile and status of the subject in the school. The former is also having a positive impact on standards of attainment in the course that all pupils follow in Key Stage 4. Standards meanwhile have been maintained in Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is having a positive impact on standards of attainment and the progress pupils make. There is now one head of department and the above-mentioned improvements are the result of good quality focused leadership, as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of all the teachers in the department. There remains one concern raised at the previous inspection in that the quality of changing facilities is still poor and the showering arrangements in the main building do not provide the privacy expected by pupils. This, along with the absence of any showers in the playing field pavilion, has a negative impact on pupils' hygiene.

232. In lessons and extra-curricular activities pupils work well together and show respect for each other's capabilities. Pupils' learning is enhanced through the teachers' consistently high expectations of them in terms of discipline, behaviour and the ability to work to their best. Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour create a positive atmosphere and promote successful learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive additional help from learning support assistants in practical lessons and this enables them to make good progress. Where there is no additional help, pupils identified as having special educational needs are well supported and integrated in lessons and make progress in line with their prior attainment.

233. The quality of teaching and learning is good with no differences between the key stages. In six out of ten lessons the quality is good. In two out of ten lessons the quality is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. All pupils consolidate previously learned skills and acquire new skills and techniques as a result of well-planned and structured progression in practical lessons. In a Year 8 boys' hockey lesson, for example, pupils revised their close control skills prior to developing these further, along with passing skills in small group competitive drills. The clear planning and structure of lessons show that teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. Clear introductions ensure that pupils are aware of what is expected of them. Skills are broken down and clearly demonstrated, to make pupils more aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make progress. In a Year 11 GCSE badminton lesson, for example, pupils were involved in paired work analysis and in the evaluation of opponents' strengths and weaknesses. This was effective in giving pupils a greater insight into their own strengths and weaknesses in play and provided them with challenge. Though nevertheless satisfactory, the occasional lesson is too task orientated and pupils are not fully stretched by being involved in evaluating one another.

234. The variety of activities in both practical and theory lessons ensures that pupils concentrate and stay on task and are encouraged to be productive and work at a good pace. In a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson, for example, pupils were immediately engaged in a 'warm-up' task prior to a range of other appropriate tasks when looking at the structure and range of competitive sporting events. In practical lessons, the range of tasks is provided by pair work, small group work as well as small-sided teamwork. All teachers successfully boost confidence and motivation by conveying the idea that everyone can succeed in practical lessons. At the same time, tasks and levels of challenge set in the majority of lessons are well matched to the physical capabilities of all pupils and to the demands of examination syllabi and therefore they are all able to make progress.



235. Effective questioning not only allows teachers to establish the extent of pupils' knowledge and understanding, but also encourages speaking and listening skills as well as the use of correct terminology. There is insufficient use of key word displays for the various games and activities to enhance further pupils' literacy skills. Teachers circulate well in lessons and their effective and timely intervention ensures pupils make good progress and understand further what is expected of them. The good use of praise, encouragement and constructive criticism ensures pupils are becoming aware of their capabilities. Sometimes, at the end of lessons evaluations tend to be by teacher comments and directed questions, rather than pupils being asked to explain their thoughts on what they have learned.

236. Appropriate homework is set and marked for both GCSE and GCE Advanced level courses. Overall, the quality of comments makes pupils aware of the progress they are making or of what they need to do to improve. The consistency and use of comments for GCSE pupils is better for the higher attainers.

237. Other than the A level course, there is no provision for physical education in the sixth form. This means that pupils' learning and their physical well being are not being well enough developed.

238. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good and further enhances pupils' learning. These include recreational as well as a range of competitive opportunities both within the college and with other schools. As a result of the continuing dedication and enthusiasm of staff in supporting extra-curricular activities, individuals have gained representative honours at county level in a wide range of sports and a number of pupils are current county age group champions in athletics and badminton. The more talented pupils benefit from departmental links with local sports clubs. They are able to join and extend their individual and teamwork skills. The department has developed manageable assessment procedures for the course that all pupils follow and is well prepared for the new curriculum and assessment levels to be introduced in September. However, the present lack of a centralised recording procedure makes it difficult to track the progress pupils make over a key stage. The department has produced predicted grades for both GCSE and GCE Advanced level candidates but, as yet, has no procedures for producing target grades for pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

239. The college has no pupils taking a full GCSE course. The majority of pupils are entered for the GCSE short course. Compared with national results in 1998 and 1999 for similar schools standards are in line with the average for A\*-C grades and above average for A\*-G grades. When compared with national results for all schools, standards are below the average for A\*-C grades and in line with the average for A\*-G grades. Compared with other subjects in the college, standards are in line with the average. There are no A level courses currently.

240. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 is average for pupils of this age. Pupils are able to give details of the main features of Christianity and the facts associated with the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. They identify key characters from the Old Testament. Their understanding of the Passover and the Torah, for example, is limited. Their knowledge and understanding of other world religions is well below average. Pupils often confuse the beliefs associated with various religions. Literary skills in Key Stage 3 are good. Pupils read clearly and confidently. They understand and use religious terminology.

241. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 is average for pupils of this age. Pupils

know and understand the key Christian beliefs. They make a link between belief and behaviour and can apply these beliefs to discussion about social issues such as marriage, abortion and euthanasia. Their knowledge of other world religions, other than Judaism and Christianity, is well below average. Their understanding of the beliefs associated with Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam is confused.

242. Pupils make satisfactory progress across both key stages. Pupils add to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Judaism. They add very little to their knowledge and understanding of other world religions. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory across both key stages. This is due to the considerable amount of support they receive from class teachers and support staff.

243. Timetabling constraints mean that religious education is only available for some students in Year 12. The subject is not currently provided for students in Year 13.

244. The college has made good progress since the previous inspection. Specialist teachers now teach religious education and this has improved the quality of teaching. High attaining pupils are being challenged in Key Stage 4 but not in Key Stage 3. Moral values are now taught within a religious and spiritual context especially at Key Stage 4. Pupils' formal debating skills remain below average. The college still does not meet statutory requirements in the sixth form.

245. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3 it is good and at Key Stage 4 satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Pupils are motivated well by the high expectations of teachers. They are well managed and this means that time is used well. There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers and these raise standards by creating a secure environment within which pupils are free to ask questions and discuss together. Good support is given to pupils with special educational needs in the form of differentiated worksheets, time given to their support and re-phrasing of question to bring clear understanding. Lessons are well paced and teachers set clear targets for pupils as groups and individually. Information and communication technology features in some lessons and in one Year 7 lesson Power Point was used to record pupils' work and to project it back onto the white-board for further discussion and analysis. Video clips are used well. For example, in Years 7 and 10 these were used to enable pupils to experience first-hand Jewish family customs and the life of Joseph. The variety of teaching strategies at Key Stage 4 is limited by the emphasis on examination preparation. Textbooks and work sheets lack sufficient contemporary references.

246. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. They are keen to read and to learn. They work together effectively to encourage and help one another. Very little time is wasted on matters of discipline and therefore pupils devote the whole lesson time to increasing knowledge and understanding. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good opportunities are given for discussion of values and beliefs. Controversial issues are effectively opened up and discussed in detail within a religious and spiritual context.

247. Assessment and marking are good. Marks in books are invariably accompanied by extended comments giving clear targets for improvement. The department is sympathetically and efficiently led and managed. Resources are somewhat dated and there are insufficient modern textbooks reflecting contemporary thinking. Assessment criteria are

under-developed but these are being re-evaluated in the light of the new Cornwall Agreed Syllabus coming into effect this year.

## **OTHER COURSES**

### **A LEVEL ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**

248. Standards in the economics and business A level course are good. There is consolidation of previous learning and evidence of new learning occurring. Coursework and project work produced by most students are of a good standard.

249. A level results at the end of Year 13 are usually good. In 1999, all nine students passed with seven gaining grades in the A to C range. Results were better than were expected for many students. Most students recall knowledge of economic institutions and the main features of the UK economy and its place within the world economy. The most able demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts and techniques of analysis used by economists. Students in Year 13 evaluate the logical consistency and accuracy of economic statements on the basis of factual evidence and theoretical analysis. Students' progress is hindered because they do not all regularly read a quality newspaper either in college or at home.

250. Progress is good in most lessons and in students' notebooks. Most are familiar with a wide variety of economic language and they are developing skills in precise and expressive writing. Girls are better than boys at developing clear thinking, accurate and appropriate expression and in following a coherent line of argument. A few students collect appropriate information but others lack sufficient skills in research and do not make full use of the library's services.

251. The standard of teaching in economics and business is good. Teaching has clear objectives and challenging content and activities. An exercise covering consultancy to Bude Bakery was both challenging and well organised. Expectations are high and students challenged according to their abilities. Classes are well managed; time and resources are used to good effect and most students work productively.

252. Students have a positive attitude to work and learn well from their mistakes as well as from their successes. Girls show more perseverance than boys do when answers are not readily available. A majority of students in both Year 12 and Year 13 know their work and understand it; they display confidence and high self-esteem and both boys and girls tackle new areas with confidence. Students use CD-ROM's effectively in order to learn how information can be organised and presented. Most students enhance their work through an interest in solving numerical problems involving money or measures to raise or distribute finance.

253. The economics and business course was not taught at the time of the previous inspection.

### **GNVQ (HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE)**

254. Standards on the Advanced course are satisfactory. In recent years, few students have reached the higher levels of the assessment criteria such as distinction level. In 1999, the one student entered was awarded a pass grade.

255. Students currently gain an appropriate understanding of the caring profession and

develop relevant skills for use in the Health and Caring community and the world of work. Students are showing good evidence of their knowledge and skills in their portfolios. The lower attaining students over time have met the basic requirements to gain a GNVQ, which is a major achievement. There is good independent learning taking place, which develops planning skills and investigative skills. Students benefit from the strong work experience links with the local caring professions.

256. Students are taking on increasing degrees of responsibility for developing and monitoring their own learning programmes and they are actively involved in providing evidence for assessment purposes. Assignment work, group work, community service and relevant work experience are all helping students develop good vocational knowledge and skills. Students apply concepts of health and caring to practical situations. They are knowledgeable about care services, support and well-being, nutrition, human development and disease. Most students are building up an individual portfolio of evidence to prove that they have achieved the outcomes required by each unit. These portfolios consist of relevant assignments, employer records and reports. Students' work is accurately assessed by internal and external verifiers.

257. Progress is good and there is a focus on students' performance to encourage active approaches to learning. Students tackle their work with enthusiasm and accept a good level of responsibility as when they can review and evaluate their own performance. The major weakness in what is being done is that Year 12 students do not prioritise tasks when time and resources are limited. Valuable parts of the course are the emphasis on students taking responsibility for much of their learning, which is monitored closely and evaluated through a system of tutorials, as well as the use of action planning techniques and the close links enjoyed with local employers.

258. Teachers use a range of methods effectively to encourage students to express themselves orally and listen to the contributions of others in the group. Methods employed vary from question and answer, group discussions and role-play exercises. Students use and develop their interviewing skills. A good example is a student questionnaire on causes and symptoms of meningitis. Students understand the need to write their reports and records clearly and accurately. Spelling mistakes are highlighted. Different strategies are used in order to correct and improve spelling. All students are encouraged to use computers whenever possible and are effective in their work on databases, spreadsheets, graphics and text processing.

259. The quality of teaching is good. Students are being encouraged to develop self-knowledge and they are taught to make informed choices about future vocational opportunities for them as individuals. Teaching is providing students with information on the world of work and to experience it for themselves with special regard to health and social care. There is a clear transfer of communication skills, use of numeracy and use of information skills and working with others. Lessons encourage the development of interpersonal skills such as responding to new people and situations that will be encountered out of school and help students gain in confidence. There is strong encouragement and development of independent study by providing supported opportunities for research, planning and evaluation of work. The staff work together with outside agencies to give advice on health and social care options, to enable students to plan and set goals for future career choice and progression.

260. Staff give students a clear indication of the standard of their work in relation to GNVQ grades. There is good monitoring of classwork and homework. Students are taught to see clearly the structure and demands of the caring profession.

### **GCSE (INFORMATION STUDIES)**

261. Standards of attainment in the GCSE Information Studies course are close to the national average. In 1999, more than half the entrants gained a GCSE examination pass at grades A\*-C.

262. Pupils are well prepared for the logic, depth and breadth of the analysis undertaken in Information Studies. Girls are better than boys in their accuracy in presenting ideas but there are, even amongst the best pupils, gaps and flaws demonstrated. Pupils' skills are not fully developed in note taking, planning and essay writing, learning how to answer the question set and how to work within time constraints.

263. Most pupils are making good progress in that they are achieving or exceeding previous levels of knowledge expected for their age. From both observation of lessons and the scrutiny of written work, pupils are giving reasoned responses to the tasks set them. Poor work is challenged and pupils are expected to support their answers and show their reasoning. Most pupils are able to demonstrate sufficient subject knowledge to be able to extend their work beyond the confines of previous efforts. The standard of written and number work at the end of Key Stage 4 is good. All pupils work hard and most gain in confidence. Work is challenging in Year 10 and more so in Year 11.

264. Teaching is good. The work is challenging for all levels of ability. Tasks are interesting and alert teachers challenge mediocre responses. All pupils are expected to contribute to the class discussions and most have learnt something new by the end of the lesson. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are able to work without close supervision and their levels of motivation, interest and degree of attention are good. A few pupils are reluctant to take initiative or accept responsibility and a small number are unable to concentrate for more than a few minutes. These pupils also show an undue dependence on their teacher.

265. Lessons have clear aims and purposes. Pupils are able to see the point of what they are asked to do. Pupils are acquiring skills and knowledge at Key Stage 4 progressively and at a good pace. Teachers prepare their lessons carefully which ensures orderly teaching and learning and time is managed effectively. When appropriate, complementary and extending homework is set. Not all Key Stage 4 pupils complete their homework, which influences their rate of progress.

266. The conduct of lessons at Key Stage 4 signals high expectations and high, but attainable challenges are set. The range of teaching styles employed ensures pupils apply themselves to work with purpose and self-confidence. Well-structured lessons enhance pupils' numerical ability and support attainment. All pupils on this course have appropriate competence in using computers to aid their learning. The teaching and learning in both years involve active interaction between a pupil, teacher and computer through the screen display and printouts. Pupils are experiencing increased levels of motivation and interest through their learning being supported by the use of computers. For example, pupils are enhancing their literacy skills by using information and communication technology and multi-media systems.

## **GNVQ (BUSINESS)**

267. Standards on the Advanced GNVQ business course are average. In 1999, completion rates and the number of merits and passes awarded were average. Past results have been higher. GNVQ (Intermediate) results have been below average. Out of seven entries last year only two female students gained a pass.

268. Currently, good progress is being made by a majority of students who are able to understand the way businesses and finance operate and they are learning to take decisions. Their teachers place a strong emphasis on practical activities and group work, which most students enjoy. They welcome using their own initiative when undertaking economic research and both boys and girls are willing to take responsibility for self-organisation and motivation so that their work is completed on time.

269. Students on this course develop creative and analytical thinking through investigating business and markets and producing detailed business plans. They acquire new skills, which are preparing them for entry into employment in business or higher education. In most lessons students plan, negotiate, co-operate and share with others and increasingly take responsibility for their own learning. Most students identify aspects of business behaviour affected by its external environment and analyse ways in which business responds to a range of factors. There is a weakness in the area of organising and gathering information shown by girls and boys, who struggle to use information to develop and clarify ideas. Girls are stronger in communicating effectively, matching style and media to audience and purpose.

270. The quality of students' work both written and practical, over a period of time is good. They show pride in the presentation of their work using information technology appropriately. The quality of oral response is satisfactory. Students' relationships with their teacher and each other are generally good. Proficiency in mathematics is barely satisfactory and students are uncertain in basic arithmetical computation and have few opportunities to practise and use their number skills to develop their work. There is development of good language skills through a range of meaningful and relevant activities.

271. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers organise and change the working environment appropriately for the range of activities taking place. Students are being taught to take responsibility for the organisation of their work. Clear expectations are communicated to students and instructions and explanations are unambiguous. The teachers' personal enthusiasm stimulates and maintains students' interest in learning. The characteristics of the good lessons are secure knowledge base, high expectations and the teacher showing a concern for standards of attainment. In most lessons there was rigour and intellectual stimulus. Lessons contain activities that develop knowledge and problem solving skills. There is a balance between those activities, which are succinct, and those which are more open-ended and which take longer to complete. Most of the tasks try and use students' own prior knowledge or experience as a starting point or to open up further lines of development.