

INSPECTION REPORT

BEACON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Crowborough, East Sussex

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114585

Principal : Mr P Swan

Reporting inspector: Ian Stuart
19298

Dates of inspection: 26 February – 2 March 2001

Inspection number: 186655

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
College address:	East Beeches Road Crowborough East Sussex
Postcode:	TN6 2AS
Telephone number:	01892 603000
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E J Hooper
Date of previous inspection:	22 – 26 January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19298	I Stuart	Registered inspector		What sort of college is it? ; The college's results and achievements; How well are the pupils taught? ; How well is the college led and managed?
9147	S Stock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the college care for its pupils? ; How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
12499	M Durkin	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language.	
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2711	A Jarvis	Team inspector	Science	
12885	J Hunt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	The adequacy of learning resources
27407	W Stoneham	Team inspector	Vocational education	The sixth form
10385	K Hopkins	Team inspector	Design & technology	
27666	J Dockrell	Team inspector	French; German	
	M Williams	Team inspector	Spanish	
4773	P Gilliat	Team inspector	History	The adequacy of staffing resources
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	Assessment and the monitoring of pupils' academic performance
18638	C Shaw	Team inspector	Art & design	
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Music; special educational needs	
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Physical education	The adequacy of accommodation

10759	L Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education; Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities? ; How well the college cultivates pupils' personal development
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Beacon Community College is a very large comprehensive community school of 1786 boys and girls aged 11-18 with 364 students in the sixth form. It operates on two sites and has had surplus accommodation; it was one of the first six schools in the country to be designated a specialist sports college. It is located in the small town of Crowborough within a predominantly rural area of East Sussex, near the border with Kent, a county which operates a selective system of secondary education. Increasing numbers of pupils move between the two counties for secondary education. The college serves an area with a lower than average amount of social and economic disadvantage, which is reflected in the below average percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is a bit higher than in most schools; however, most pupils are white with only 35 from ethnic minority backgrounds. The college has 307 pupils with special educational needs, a proportion broadly in line with the national average; 24 have Statements of Special Educational Needs, which is proportionately below the national average. Although there are some variations between different year groups, the levels of attainment of pupils on entry are broadly in line with the national average.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Beacon is a good school; it is effective and has many strengths. Most pupils achieve well, and the sixth form adds particularly good educational value. Despite its size, Beacon is a friendly, civilised place, with very good relationships. Overall, teaching is good. Most pupils and students are proud of their college, and they have some outstanding opportunities, such as the links with Gambia. However, there are elements of underachievement throughout the college, particularly at Key Stage 4 and amongst boys. There are also variations in the quality of the pupils' experiences, a situation made worse recently by serious problems of recruiting the most suitably qualified teachers. These inconsistencies and problems have resulted in a loss of confidence in the college by a number of parents. The principal and senior managers of the college, many of whom are recently appointed to their posts, are tackling the weaknesses vigorously within a new management structure designed to bring better cohesion to the college. There are many signs that significant improvements have been made in a short period of time. As it addresses the variations in its performance, it is vital that the college works very closely with parents and the local community, so that all elements of the community college partnership feel able to contribute to its success, and share its commitment to further improvement. The college, including post-16 provision, provides sound value for money at present, but it now has the capacity to become even more effective.

What the college does well

- Overall standards are above national averages, and pupils tend to achieve better results than would be expected from their standards at entry.
- Most pupils and students are confident and mature young people, enjoying very good relationships with each other and with their teachers.
- The quality of education in the sixth form is very high.
- The new management structures provide a good foundation for improvement across the whole college.
- Opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- Whilst teaching is good overall, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT), particularly at Key Stage 3, is unsatisfactory.
- Inadequacies in the overall accommodation adversely affect achievement.
- Elements of the college's partnership with parents and the community need strengthening.
- Despite being very good in religious education, provision for the pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The report of the previous inspection in January 1996 stated that there was no major cause for concern. However, the college has been through a turbulent period in recent years. A major deficit in the college's budget required a substantial reduction in the number of teachers, which affected morale and the rate of progress and improvement. Although still being implemented, the college now has a management structure to achieve greater accountability and improve the monitoring of its work. Levels of equipment in ICT, and its teaching at Key Stage 4 have been improved, but there are still problems, including access to computers, particularly at Key Stage 3. Financial planning, linked to the college's development priorities, is now better, though the improvement plan needs to be fully costed in all its different elements. The new Key Stage 4 curriculum is a considerable improvement, and reporting and assessment arrangements are now good. Weaknesses remain in arrangements for collective worship. The rate of improvement overall is now accelerating sufficiently for improvement since the last inspection to be judged satisfactory.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	B	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Over the last three years, the overall points score attained in the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above the national average in mathematics and science; they have been average in English, rising to above average in 2000. The trend has been slightly below the national trend. The results in 2000 show achievements above what would be expected from the same pupils' 1997 Key Stage 2 test scores. Generally, standards in work seen during the inspection at Key Stage 3 are better than recent test scores. At GCSE, over the last three years, overall results have been above the national average, again with a trend below the national trend. The comparison with similar schools is based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, which is below average at Beacon. However, the below average performance comparison points to confirmation of the inspectors' judgement that there are elements of underachievement, particularly at Key Stage 4. Nonetheless, standards seen during the inspection at Key Stage 4 are generally better than past examination results, showing increasingly successful achievements. At A-level, based on the last three years, the average points score has been close to the national average, but, again, standards seen during the inspection are higher, showing good achievement at present in the sixth form. The highest standards throughout the college are in mathematics, art, design & technology and music, and, in the sixth form, in science and French. Targets set by the college are suitably demanding in its efforts to raise standards further, and the college is on course to meet them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Good. Most pupils enjoy the college and are involved with its activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall; the atmosphere around the college is positive. There are, however, pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour in some classes, usually related to weaker teaching.
Personal development and relationships	Very good between pupils and with their teachers. The level of involvement in extra-curricular activities is high.
Attendance	Good. Attendance rates are above the national average, with few significant variations between year groups. The split site means that some lessons start late and teaching time is lost.

Only a small minority of pupils shows negative attitudes, and personal relationships are a strength of the college. Sometimes, however, pupils are easily distracted from their tasks, leading to a decline in the rate of work in some classes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching is good across most subjects, including English, mathematics and science; it is particularly strong in music and religious education, and less strong in ICT. Teaching in the sixth form is better overall than at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching is at least satisfactory over 97 per cent of lessons; it is unsatisfactory in only about 3 per cent of lessons. It is very good or better in about 28 per cent of lessons. The teachers' knowledge and understanding are notable strengths; most teachers plan well and have effective teaching methods. Some less successful lessons have insufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and, sometimes, even otherwise good lessons lose pace towards their end. There are too many variations in the quality of marking, from excellent analysis and helpful comments for improvement to a lack of any marking for long periods of time. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the varied, sensitive and flexible support provided. There are more instances of underachievement amongst boys than girls, but, generally, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils. In almost all cases, the quality of the pupils' learning reflects the quality of the teaching, helped by the pupils' positive attitudes in most lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The new Key Stage 4 curriculum offers a broad range of options for future progression, and provision in the sixth form is particularly rich. The careers programme is very good. Arrangements for ICT at Key Stage 3 do not ensure that statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision is made for intensive and special help, for support in classrooms, and for appropriate curriculum arrangements.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory provision within the available resources. Teachers and support assistants work sensitively with pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The wide range of classroom and other activities ensures that moral, social and cultural development is good. However, the lack of a whole college policy means that the pupils' spiritual development is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall.
How well the college cares for its pupils	Child protection and welfare provisions are good, as is pastoral support through the house system. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are generally good.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Good. The principal and senior managers are providing clear educational direction within new structures appropriate to take the college forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The new committees, linked to the college's management structure, are now allowing governors to exercise their roles more effectively.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. A recognition of the importance of evaluation is now established, and the college's procedures are beginning to have an impact on its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial planning is now good and providing an informed view of spending and for establishing priorities, and for ensuring that the principles of best value are soundly applied.

In common with many other schools, there has been a serious shortage of suitably qualified teachers in the present college year in some areas, especially in mathematics and modern foreign languages. This has had an adverse impact on the education of some pupils. Strategies now being put into place to recruit and retain good teachers are crucially important for the college's future success. Generally, there are adequate numbers of teachers and resources. However, overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory. The split site has some advantages for a large institution, but the inappropriate distribution of space and facilities between the two sites, and the poor quality of some of the Beeches site, create stress for pupils and teachers, the need for much movement, and the loss of teaching time. These factors can adversely affect the quality of education, despite heroic efforts by teachers and much good will and tolerance by pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enjoyment of the college by most pupils • The college's expectations that pupils will work hard • The overall progress that pupils make. • The college's approachability when problems arise • The range of extra-curricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An end to disrupted and poor teaching caused mainly by staff shortages and absence. • The quality of information provided by the college • Homework arrangements • The way the college works with parents • The behaviour of some pupils

Inspectors are in general agreement with the parents' assessments of the college's strengths. Many parents wrote thoughtful, well considered letters which acknowledged good features, but gave details of their concerns, mainly on the points mentioned above. A summary of these concerns has been passed to the college. Staffing difficulties have eased, but are not yet fully resolved. Information, including reports, and contact with parents are generally good, but there are inconsistencies in practice, particularly in the use of the planner, and a review of consultation arrangements would be welcomed by parents. Similarly, there are too many variations in the amount, quality and timing of homework. Behaviour is generally good, and often very good, but inspectors agree that even the small amount of poor behaviour disrupts learning and is unacceptable. Overall, the college has satisfactory links with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and pupils' achievements

1. The college has information about the standards of most pupils when they enter the college, and it tests those for whom it has little or unreliable information. An analysis of all the available information, including Key Stage 2 test results and cognitive ability tests (CATs), indicates that standards on entry are broadly average. There are variations from year to year, with the present Year 8, for example, containing fewer higher attainers, and, in some years, girls were attaining more highly than boys on entry. The variations are not significant, except that standards in English on entry have been lower than those in mathematics in all years for which information is available; standards in the Key Stage 2 science tests have tended to be between English and mathematics. The college is setting targets for attainments that are suitably and progressively demanding but realistic.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3, the overall average points score of boys and girls in the national tests have been above average over the period 1998 to 2000, with a trend below the national trend. Over this period, results in mathematics have been higher than science, which, in turn, have been higher than English, where results, over the three years, have been in line with the national average. In 2000, the average points score for all core subjects is above the national average, though English results are still lower than the other two core subjects, especially in the number of pupils reaching level 6 or above; at this level, pupils do particularly well in mathematics, which is well above the national average. In relation to the pupils' 1997 Key Stage 2 tests, the 2000 results at Key Stage 3 show achievements that are above average in terms of educational value added. Compared with schools with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, the college's performance in all the core subjects is close to the average. The differences between standards of girls and boys are similar to the national pattern.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the overall average GCSE/GNVQ points score obtained by pupils has been above the national average over the last three years, with a trend below the national trend, and with the boys' results close to the national average. In 2000, however, the boys' results are above the national average, as are the girls', with the gap between the boys' attainments and those of girls slightly less than the national gap. The proportions of pupils reaching the benchmarks of 5 or more A*-C and 5 or more A*-G grades are above the national average by a greater amount than that shown by the total points score. The difference is explained by the lower than usual number of subjects taken by pupils for which accreditation is available compared with many schools. The new curriculum, now introduced at Key Stage 4 for pupils in Year 10, provides more opportunities for pupils at all levels of attainment. Nonetheless, the pupils' performance at GCSE/GNVQ, based on average total points score per pupil, is below average in comparison with similar schools. This comparison is based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, which is below average at Beacon. However, combined with results which do remain above average nationally, having been at that level at the end of Key Stage 3, it indicates a degree of underachievement by some pupils at Key Stage 4, and, overall, only sound educational value added. There are significant variations in the relative performance between subjects. In 2000, for example, pupils taking business studies, history, and geography obtained grades which, overall, were nearly a grade higher than those they obtained in the other subjects they took; this is due, at least in part, to the good assessment practices in these subjects which give pupils very clear information about their progress. On the other hand, pupils obtained, overall, lower grades in some other subjects, notably Spanish, music and ICT in 2000.
4. Over the last three years, A-level results have been close to the national average, but, in 2000, they are above average. A detailed analysis of the 2000 results, comparing each student's performance with their GCSE attainments two years' earlier, shows the large majority of students obtaining results better than would be expected. In some cases, the students' results show remarkably high educational value added.

5. In work seen during the inspection, standards generally are better than past examination and test results, showing increasingly successful achievements, and reflecting the overall good teaching and learning that is taking place.
6. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen in English during the inspection are broadly average. In relation to their standards on entry, which are lower than those in the other core subjects, most pupils are making good progress, and, therefore achieving well. Extended creative writing is a strong feature, as is the improvement in basic skills of all pupils. Speaking and listening skills are broadly in line with the expected level. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work seen are above the national average. The work of most pupils continues to improve and represents good achievement. All pupils use drafting and re-drafting skills to hone their work, but some low attainers do not re-draft as successfully as high and middle attaining pupils. Speaking and listening skills are well developed; most pupils speak with care and a keen sense of their audience. At A-level, standards of work seen are above the national average. Students display high quality speaking and listening skills with maturity and intellectual rigour. At all stages, pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are well supported and integrated into lessons; as a result, they are achieving well, in line with other pupils. Both boys and girls are achieving equally well in English.
7. In work seen during the inspection in mathematics, standards in all key stages are above national expectations. This is particularly so in the sixth form where a high proportion of the work is of a very high standard. However, difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers for mathematics during the present college year have affected the achievements of some pupils because their teaching has been disrupted. The degree of disruption for individual pupils has varied considerably according to which class they are in. The position is now relatively stable, with appropriately qualified and experienced staff in post, and with planning for additional recruitment well advanced. This should ensure that the above average standards overall and the good achievements of most pupils can be re-established for all pupils. In Year 7, pupils are provided with challenging work from the start; there is a good balance between the attainment targets in the National Curriculum, and achievement throughout Key Stage 3 is good. In Key Stage 4, 'fast-track' groups make particularly good progress, and take their GCSE examinations early. Pupils of all levels of attainment work confidently when planning individual investigations. The pupils' achievements in general in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils in their year group; they are given additional help and encouragement when required. Achievements in the sixth form are very good, with students working well throughout each lesson.
8. In science, by the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards of work seen are above the expected level. However, there is scope to further improve on the numbers of pupils who reach the higher levels of attainment. The level of competence when carrying out practical work is high, but the development of whole investigations is held back until the latter part of the key stage. In many lessons good thinking skills are fostered; a telling example was seen in a Year 7 class where pupils quickly identified patterns in their results and were able to use this to predict how the trend might continue. Standards at Key Stage 4 are also above average. Work seen in GCSE double and triple science classes is focused towards the higher grades, challenging the pupils to achieve at a high level. However, standards of scientific knowledge and understanding in single science are below average. Standards of work in the sixth form are above average. The work seen reflects the variety, rigour and challenge that teachers plan into their teaching; as a result, students are achieving well.
9. The majority of pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment in ICT. However, at the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen during the inspection are at the average level for 14 year-olds; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are below the national average. The achievements of the majority of pupils are, therefore, unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Standards of work seen in classes vary widely from pupil to pupil. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3 where a minority of pupils are confident users of computers and can make good progress with the practical tasks set largely on an independent basis. However many pupils are far less confident and require significant help from either a

technician or the teacher to allow them to make progress. During Key Stages 3 and 4, the majority of pupils develop increasing confidence in using and applying software relating to handling and communicating information. However, their knowledge and skills relating to measurement and control aspects of the National Curriculum requirements are far less well developed. Pupils and students make increasing and appropriate use of ICT across a range of subjects. In particular subjects such as art, business studies, English, geography, mathematics and music, good use is now made, which is raising attainment. Sensible and appropriate use of ICT is also made in many aspects of the sixth form provision. In several subjects, significant use is made of computer based learning materials, CD-ROMs and the internet. Opportunities for making appropriate use of ICT are however missed in a range of other subjects; consequently, students are achieving less well than they should in the application of modern technology to their learning.

10. In most other subjects, standards are above average, with good achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good achievement in the sixth form. In art & design, the good achievements at Key Stage 3 are continued at Key Stage 4, so that standards are well above average. The depth of research and the pupils' ability to appraise and develop their own work are very good. There are very high standards of work and achievement in the sixth form as well. Similar trends are seen in design & technology. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work are well above average overall. In most subjects in this curriculum area, pupils make very good progress and are achieving very well in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the GCSE courses. In geography, achievement is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, with average standards at Key Stage 3 improving to above average at Key Stage 4. This is due to more specialised teaching at Key Stage 4 and to the thorough assessment arrangements which enable the pupils' progress to be monitored carefully and appropriate action taken. In history, at the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above the nationally expected level for 14 year-olds; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also above average, whilst those at A-level are average. At all levels, pupils achieve well and make good progress, except occasionally in Year 9 when a few boys underachieve. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work in French during the inspection are at national average levels. Pupils in Year 9 started learning a second modern foreign language at the beginning of the college year. In Spanish lower and average attaining pupils reach levels which are broadly typical for beginners at this stage. Higher attaining pupils do well, responding with interest to the more challenging teaching they receive, so that their standards compare well with those of first language learners; this represents good achievement. In German, all pupils achieve well, accelerating to a standard above expectations from a single year's study.
11. Standards in music overall are well above average. Most pupils enter the college with average musical skills and, overall, they make very good progress over time. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils' attainments are above average and this represents good achievement across all groups. In physical education, the good progress and achievements of Key Stage 3 continue in Key Stage 4. These achievements are enhanced through their involvement in extra curricular clubs, college teams and representative honours. Standards in religious education are above average at all levels, including the sixth form; in this subject, throughout the year groups, there are good and very good examples of thoughtful oral work, and of insightful and sensitive writing. Standards in the wide range of vocational and non-National Curriculum subjects at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form vary, but, in most of them, pupils and students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. For example, pupils taking the foundation GNVQ course in Year 10 are below average in their levels of attainment, but are achieving well through good teaching and an appropriate course which are motivating them to do their best. At A-level, standards in lessons seen ranged from well below average in an economics lesson to above average in, for example, a sociology lesson. In many A-level classes, achievement is very good in relation to the students' prior attainments.

12. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Sometimes it is very good in Key Stage 3 for those who are targeted for particular additional help, including a few pupils who have significant difficulties in reading. They go on to make good progress in those subjects where work is adapted and matched to their needs. In physical education, art and music, they make as much progress as their peers. Support assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress made by pupils including those with specific learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They make a good contribution in the classroom, and are seen as another professional providing firm yet caring attention as and when needed; as a result, pupils who benefit from this help are achieving well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. The overwhelming majority of pupils in the college behave well and have positive attitudes to their work. The foundation on which these are built is undoubtedly the very good relationships, which pervade the life of the college, not only between the pupils and the adults, but also amongst the pupils themselves. Occasionally these very good relationships break down, leading to pockets of unsatisfactory and immature behaviour, which has a detrimental effect on the learning of all the pupils in the class. However, overall, the key to the many good lessons seen during the inspection is the strength of the pupil teacher relationships; this creates a positive learning environment and contributes substantially to the progress pupils make. When these strong relationships are coupled with high expectations by the class teacher, the pupils have confidence to tackle challenging tasks and activities, such as occurred in a Year 12 lesson when students talked through moral and ethical implications of the right to have a child. Amongst the younger pupils this is also the case as, for example, in a Year 8 music lesson, when pupils were encouraged by the infectious enthusiasm of their teacher.
14. The very good personal development of the pupils is illustrated by the way they involve themselves with the many opportunities offered by the college, particularly extra curricular activities. In lessons, the pupils are usually well prepared and organised and work co-operatively together and show respect towards their teachers.
15. Pupils and students have good attitudes to their work. They enjoy much of what they are given to do. For example, in many science lessons pupils are capable of asking searching questions and show good scientific curiosity and try to explain what they see. Positive attitudes to learning are generally engendered by stimulating, confident teaching; for example, in a Year 7 design & technology lesson, the teacher's ability to capitalise on the pupils' own ideas contributed to their self confidence and learning in the subject. Occasionally, some pupils do not demonstrate these positive attitudes and have a passive and sometimes negative approach to their lessons; for example, in a Year 8 English lesson, a small group of pupils were restless and inattentive which distracted other pupils and had a negative effect on the class as a whole.
16. Pupils with special educational needs relate well to their teachers and support staff and feel comfortable working in small groups. The level of help they receive contributes significantly to the positive attitudes they display.
17. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is predominantly good. Although a significant number of parents voiced concerns over the behaviour of pupils, particularly in lessons, there was little evidence during the inspection of unsatisfactory behaviour. Indeed, around the college at break times, between lessons and at mealtimes, in what are relatively crowded areas, it is noticeable how quiet, friendly and informal the atmosphere is, with pupils always willing to talk to and help visitors. In discussions, pupils had positive views about their college and were not concerned about bullying or intimidating behaviour; they had confidence in the college to deal effectively with any such issues. However, there are occasions when the behaviour of small groups of pupils, in particular amongst the boys, has a negative effect on the learning of all pupils in the lesson; although it is often low-key disturbance, its persistence infiltrates the whole class. This is often connected to a lack of pace in the lesson, inappropriate tasks and poor pupil management; in a Year 10 business education lesson, for example, unsatisfactory teaching, coupled to poor class control, led to many pupils losing interest and disrupting the learning of all.

18. The college has a very low number of permanent exclusions for its size and compared with schools nationally; only two pupils have been excluded permanently in the previous college year. The number of fixed term exclusions is also low. The college's commitment to inclusion is emphasised through the 'personal best' policy which encourages achievement and positive behaviour. The few pupils at risk of exclusion do get extra support from staff in the learning development area.
19. The pupils' attendance at 92.3 per cent is good. It is above the national average. The pupils' authorised absence is below national averages; the pupils' unauthorised absence is above national averages, but this is due to the way the college has closed its registers early before the statutory half hour leeway, and is not significant. There are no marked differences in attendance between the year groups. Occasionally, pupils are late arriving for lessons but this is due more often than not to the split site. Registers are taken promptly and in accordance with statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is better than that seen at the last inspection. It is judged to be good overall; it is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form, where the quality of the teaching and, often, the excellent attitudes of the students contribute to the high quality of education in the sixth form. Teaching is at least satisfactory in over 97 per cent of lessons; it is good or better in slightly over two-thirds of lessons, a proportion rising to three-quarters in the sixth form. These figures are better than the overall national statistics. The quality of teaching is good across most subjects, including English, mathematics and science; it is particularly strong in music and religious education where it is judged very good, and less strong in ICT and modern foreign languages where it is judged satisfactory. Only five unsatisfactory lessons were observed across a number of subjects, including one subject where excellent teaching was also observed. There is a close link between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning; occasionally, the pupils' attitudes, positive or negative, meant that learning was either better or not as good as the teaching, but this is rare.
21. It is the expectations that teachers have of what pupils can achieve that distinguishes the best teaching from the less successful and unsatisfactory. Where expectations are high, pupils are challenged, the pace of lessons is brisk and the pupils' learning is good or better; this takes place within a well planned and well ordered lesson that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of their starting points at the beginning of the lesson. For example, in an outstanding English lesson in Year 11 containing pupils of all abilities, the teacher created a first class atmosphere that matched the quality of the poems, and used graphic images to engage the pupils' attention and to highlight the tragedy and horrors of the poem. A pin could be heard dropping when the teacher showed photographs from different periods and places in the 20th century. The pupils returned to their individual work on the poems with extra vigour and a keener perspective; they talked about the poems with renewed animation and deeper insight, and were genuinely moved, feeling a new appreciation of the power of poetry. A Year 7 science lesson provides another example of very high expectations leading to excellent learning; here the planning, timing and variety of methods were the particular hallmarks of the excellent teaching, and the approach was purposeful but friendly. The objectives of the lesson were set out on an overhead transparency so that pupils knew what was expected of them; a role play exercise was followed by a modelling exercise to mimic resistance. There was plenty of praise to encourage the pupils, and challenge came through searching questions and activities, all conducted at a brisk pace. As a result, the pupils were constantly involved in learning and understanding about the transfer of energy from batteries to other components of a circuit, as well as developing their abstract thinking to illustrate scientific principles. Whilst these two lessons illustrate some of the very best teaching, many lessons incorporate some of these characteristics of logical progression, varied activities, challenge and active learning. Less successful teaching lacks these qualities, often involving pupils in routine work that fails to stimulate their interest and their thinking; often time is not well used with no sense of urgency. Even in otherwise good lessons, sometimes the pace drops

towards the ends of lessons; as a result, pupils achieve less than they should and develop a complacency towards their work which leads to a decline in standards.

22. There is no link between the quality of teaching and learning and the different attainment levels of pupils. Good or better teaching was observed from Year 7 to Year 13 in mixed ability classes and in classes where pupils are setted according to their prior attainment. For example, in a GNVQ foundation class of low attaining Year 10 pupils on the use and abuse of alcohol, the teacher, with very good support from a learning support assistant, used a variety of successful strategies to motivate the pupils and to provide different types of support to meet the needs of different pupils. The basis of the success of the lesson was very good planning, high quality questioning, constant encouragement, and the expectation that all pupils would work hard for all the lesson. As a result, the learning was very good and all pupils experienced success. In another lesson with a small group of Year 13 A-level students studying textiles, the teacher has been using a very wide range of techniques to develop the students' learning; her detailed knowledge of the students' strengths and weaknesses has enabled her to constantly modify her methods to cater for all the students, reflecting what has gone well and not so well. The teacher expects detailed and full answers using the correct terminology, and students are constantly challenged. As a result, they are fully engrossed in their work and fully aware of what they need to do; helped by excellent resources, the students' rate of learning is excellent and their standards extremely high. Where the qualities of teaching are less in evidence, the quality of learning is also less; examples of less effective teaching and learning can equally be found in all year groups with different types of group, though to a lesser extent in the sixth form.
23. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is a notable strength in most lessons; even when the teaching is unimaginative and uninspiring, knowledge and understanding of the teachers usually allow adequate learning to take place, even though pupils are capable of being challenged more rigorously in such circumstances. Two other factors also contribute to variations in the quality of teaching. One is the quality of marking. This is too variable: the best is excellent with helpful analysis and comments for improvement; some seems virtually non-existent or very superficial. The quality of marking has a direct relationship with the quality of learning as pupils are encouraged to take pride in their work and achievements if they know it is valued by their teachers; careful marking also helps pupils in their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, so they know what to do to get better. There are variations in marking between teachers, but marking in art is an example of good practice. The other factor is the quality and amount of homework that is set; again, there are too many variations. The best builds on lessons and provides pupils with challenging tasks, often involving research. Some merely requires pupils to finish off some classwork, or is not set at all. As with marking, there is a direct link between the quality of homework and the quality of learning. There is no real pattern within the college, much depending on individual teachers. Those who mark well tend also to be those who set meaningful homework.
24. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, with examples of good practice. In the English department, schemes of work are dedicated to improving the mechanical accuracy of the pupils. At the beginning of each lesson at Key Stage 3, ten minutes is devoted to improving reading; the Global English initiative is successful in raising literacy standards because it sets realistic but concentrated targets and is well taught by very committed teachers. There is regular practice in mathematics lessons to successfully teach numeracy skills, with many containing a numeracy 'starter'. Indeed, teachers of mathematics show a very positive attitude to the national numeracy strategy. Most other subjects do teach numeracy skills where it is appropriate; science and geography teachers, in particular, emphasise such skills in their teaching of particular topics. As part of the overall very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, the teaching of these pupils is good, enabling them, in most cases, to learn at similar rates to other pupils. The quality of the specialist teaching for those withdrawn from other classes to receive additional support in their reading and literacy skills is good. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils with specific learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties; their work in lessons is good, providing firm but caring attention where needed.

25. Teaching in the sixth form is a particular strength in the college; the progress of most present sixth form students is at least good and often very good, and their learning is aided by much very good teaching. Many strong features of teaching are helping students to learn. A particular strength is that teachers have high expectations and are prepared to challenge the students' subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers also have very good subject knowledge, which they are able to impart in interesting ways. This helps to maintain concentration and enhances learning further. In some subjects, such as sociology, strong emphasis is placed on developing both literacy and numeracy skills. This too enhances learning. Many students are well motivated, articulate and keen to succeed and they are appreciative of the opportunities offered, with teaching in many of the subjects introduced into the curriculum for the first time at sixth form level making good contributions to the students' learning experiences. Though sixth form tutors undertake some effective tutorial work with students, the college has only recently begun to collect value-added data and, prior to the inspection, no value-added data was available for analysis. The college needs to increase the volume of data it has available to analyse performances and outcomes. Target setting is not presently sufficiently embedded into the workings of the sixth form and more use should be made of it to secure further improvements in examination grades.
26. Although much teaching is good or better, there are common threads to the lessons where teaching is less effective. As already identified, these are related to the teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, the quality of planning, the pace of lessons and the nature of the learning, and the quality of marking and homework. Where these are weaker, pupils are not sufficiently motivated, and this often leads to poorer attitudes and poorer behaviour. Ultimately, the pupils in these lessons do not learn as well they should because they are given too few chances to do so at levels that challenge them sufficiently. Such lessons coexist alongside many others where teaching is good, very good or even excellent. The monitoring of teaching is not yet being given a sufficiently high priority in most subjects; when it is fully embedded in the college's work, best practices can be shared and promoted strongly.

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

27. The curriculum has good breadth and balance, providing a wide range of learning opportunities for all pupils and a very good extra-curricular programme. The newly introduced Key Stage 4 curriculum is an improvement on the previous one as it offers a good range of options for future progression for all groups of pupils. Sixth form provision is very good. The amount of teaching time is, in theory, sufficient to meet the overall needs of the curriculum. However, movement between the sites of both pupils and teachers means that, on occasions, some teaching time is lost. Whilst timetabling arrangements are designed to minimise this loss, and the move in the present college year to hour long lessons cuts down on movement, this loss of time is significant and it means that, in some subjects, some pupils get less teaching time than others with a consequent adverse impact on their educational opportunities in those subjects.
28. At Key Stage 3, the college provides good coverage of all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education; the physical education curriculum has been improved by the college's Sports College funding and initiatives, and the close links with primary schools are a notable strength. The main weakness in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 occurs in ICT where present arrangements do not ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement, and, therefore, there are breaches in statutory provision. In modern foreign languages the introduction of a second language in Year 8 has extended opportunities for most pupils; however, the change from a six period day to a five period day has resulted in an inadequate time allocation for pupils in Year 8 where the two periods allocated to each language is reduced to a single period for one of the languages in alternate weeks.

29. Strategic management of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is good. The college reviews the curriculum carefully, seeking ways of expanding opportunities for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils study the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Curriculum innovation at this key stage is enhancing all the pupils' opportunities to progress and gain some academic success, with all courses in the present Year 10 allowing the opportunity for external accreditation. The provision for lower attaining pupils is improving with the introduction of GNVQ courses at both foundation and intermediate levels. Higher attaining pupils are able to opt for triple science and to take their GCSE examination in mathematics a year earlier than is usual. These arrangements are providing a commendable degree of flexibility to meet the needs of pupils, whilst maintaining appropriate breadth and balance.
30. A very good and varied sixth form curriculum is offered. Over 25 advanced courses are available and a range of advanced and intermediate vocational options further enhances choice. Other developments include the introduction of a key skills course in Year 12 and a National Vocational Qualification in 'Football in the Community'. Students opting for this course can gain additional qualifications, including qualifying as Football Association approved coaches and referees. Such a wide curriculum provides students with considerable choice, and the quality of the careers education and guidance offered during Year 11 helps prospective sixth formers to make informed and realistic choices. The quality of careers advice during the sixth form is similarly good. Students appreciate the very good quality of advice given and this helps them to plan their careers beyond college. The curriculum is enriched through opportunities in sports, music and drama. There is an active college council, and students produce a sixth form magazine. Very good opportunities are presented for students to accept responsibility. This is highlighted by the college's long established links with a Gambian community. Sixth formers raise money to finance improvements in the Gambia. During the last year, they raised over £9000 and over 50 students visited Gambia to see for themselves how their money was being spent to improve health and educational facilities. Such projects have a deep and lasting impact on the students involved. The curriculum is also making provision for talented students, especially for those who show prowess in athletics, rugby and soccer. Through the Sports Development programme, such students are offered specialised and intensive training. Many other students with a keen interest in sport gain extra accreditation through the Sports Leaders Award Scheme. Though the sixth form curriculum has many strengths, it does not adequately provide for religious education, nor does it offer planned opportunities for work experience. Though vocational students will undertake work experience, it is a voluntary activity for other students. As part of the underlying philosophy to boost the students' aspirations, a well-planned programme of work experience will further inform their career choices.
31. Strategies for teaching literacy are sound. The college has worked hard to improve literacy levels by capitalising on the established literacy hour at primary school, and most subject areas give sufficient prominence to the development of literacy skills in their schemes of work. Similarly, the prominence given to literacy by the senior management team shows the college's commitment to improving literacy standards; the strategies being implemented will lead to steadily improving standards. There is, however, no whole college policy for the development of numeracy, and there is limited recognition that all departments have a contribution to make to the development of the pupils' numeracy skills. As a result, many subjects include no reference to numeracy in their schemes of work, and though there may be some effective use of number, there is often inconsistency in its application. Although the overall strategies to teach numeracy are satisfactory because of effective provision within mathematics, a valuable opportunity is missed to promote consistency in the use of number, and the mathematics department acknowledges that it has a key role to play in the formulation of a school policy.

32. The college has very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum, which is sufficiently adaptable to meet particular needs. For example, in Years 8 and 9, some pupils follow a new modern foreign language course, based mainly on speaking, in the learning development department. A dedicated co-ordinator manages the learning development department and is assisted by a team of committed support assistants and teaching staff. A key strength of the provision is the high level of adult attention and help given to pupils. Good records are kept of the pupils on the special needs register and assessment is used well to identify and monitor the pupils' needs. Well-written pupil profiles and individual education plans (IEPs) are issued to subject departments to help them plan work that is relevant to pupils on the special needs register. Most subject departments carefully match work to the pupils' abilities, such as a good example seen in a geography lesson where video notes had been prepared to encourage the pupils in their writing tasks. Worksheets in humanities and personal and social education have been adapted to support pupil achievement. Pupils in Year 7 who are below level 4 in English receive additional support over a period of two terms to boost their confidence and raise standards; as a result, they are making sound progress through one-to-one reading, reading with other pupils in the same group, word games and computer assisted learning. Other strategies such as the global English computer programme, the Year 9 literacy scheme and better liaison between subject areas and the learning development staff have had a positive impact on the pupils' learning and have led to improved literacy levels since the last inspection.
33. The programme of personal, health and social education is satisfactory overall with some very good elements. The college is aware of the importance of this area of its work, and, in order to improve and develop its practice, it has recently carried out a full audit of its provision and set up a team of senior staff to develop this aspect of the curriculum. All year groups have access to personal, social and health education; at Key Stage 4, it includes vocational advice, and the Year 8 scheme also incorporates aspects of preparation for the world of work. The programme offered to the pupils is relevant and well planned; apart from Year 9, all pupils have an hour-long lesson each week. It supports the needs of the pupils at particular ages; for example, in two Key Stage 4 lessons, pupils discussed in a mature and reflective way the issues of teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse. In the best lessons, the teachers have confidence and a good knowledge of the subject; this is the main strength of the provision in Years 8,10 and 11, where a team of teachers are responsible for the teaching. The main weakness is in Year 9, where the provision occurs across other subjects of the curriculum. The college acknowledges the need to ensure high quality teaching and to this end provides specific training for its Year 7 tutors in order to improve the delivery of lessons and develop the tutors' skills; this training is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
34. The college uses outside agencies to contribute to its personal, social and health programme including the local police liaison officer, the youth advisory service and the school nurse. This is successful; in one lesson during the inspection, the police liaison officer led a discussion on the moral issues related to youth crime, which made a positive contribution to the pupils' personal development. There are good links with other aspects of the pastoral provision, including religious education and careers education. The improved coordination between the house and year systems also makes a good contribution to the assessment and development of the personal, social and health programme. Less satisfactory are the lack of a whole college plan to ensure continuity and progression, the lack of planned opportunities to share good practice, and the lack of monitoring of teaching. There is no overall co-ordinator to develop these weaker areas, but the college has identified them for future consideration. Overall, however the social, personal and health curriculum is making a satisfactory and often a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development.
35. Careers education and guidance are very good. The programme is part of the personal, social and health education programme. The college begins its programme in Year 8, where, in one lesson, pupils were seen discussing the workplace and related issues in a sensible and well-informed way. As pupils progress through the college, a well structured careers programme supports them; it is very well co-ordinated by the head of careers. The college is fortunate to have the local careers advisory service housed in the college, which enables it to work closely with this agency

to the benefit of all pupils. Pupils make good use of the well-run careers library and various computer programs to find out more about possible careers or further education. The college is committed to providing a good quality careers service to its pupils and its work has been recognised by the local authority award 'Committed to Careers' certificate. Work placements for Year 10 pupils are effectively monitored by the head of careers and Year 10 tutors; a good feature of this is the occupational assignment which consolidates the pupils' experiences. At present there is a lack of effective links with local businesses and also a planned programme of work experience for students in the sixth form, although they receive very good guidance related to higher education and vocational training.

36. The college is a designated community college. Regrettably, therefore, there have been some recent tensions between the college and its community, particularly over certain aspects of its sports college status. The college is aware of the need to build bridges and develop the positive aspects of its relationship with the local community and to this end has recently established a community liaison committee within its governing body. There are many good examples of the way the college supports its community and the positive experiences enjoyed by the pupils. For example, the college houses the local adult education facility, which, together with local sporting groups, bring in many visitors to the college. On the other hand, the pupils themselves are involved in a variety of activities which benefit the community and contribute to their learning and personal development, such as working in a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, Millennium Volunteers working in local primary schools supporting their physical education curriculum and musical performances in the community.
37. In the wider community, language students benefit from exchange visits and Year 12 pupils took part in a scheme Dialogue 2000, which enabled them to pursue their studies at a French school. Another very good initiative is the annual trip to Gambia when sixth form students raise funds to enable them to spend time there working with and supporting young people; this makes an excellent contribution to the students' learning and personal development. Closer to home, the pupils and students benefit from the local youth service which operates in the college grounds, running a youth club and advising on certain aspects of the pupils personal, social and health education programme.
38. The college's induction procedures for its youngest pupils and their families are good; they ensure that pupils feel confident and secure when they begin their secondary education. Prior to coming to the college, the pupils are visited in their primary schools by a senior teacher and present Year 7 pupils; later, they take part in a full day's activities at the college. Also primary age pupils are able to use the college's specialist sports facilities, but other curriculum links are less well developed. The college recognises the need to re-establish strong links with post-graduate training colleges, and to develop more productive links with local businesses.
39. The college provides pupils with a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There are particular strengths in drama, the arts and sport. The college's Sports College status means that there is a very great range of opportunities for participation in activities during and outside the normal college day. There is a programme of visits, often associated with particular subjects. All the activities give pupils valuable opportunities to develop skills, broaden their experience and develop self-confidence.
40. The college has made good progress in developing the curriculum since the time of the previous inspection. In particular, it has enhanced the vocational opportunities for those pupils for whom such courses are more relevant and appropriate than a full programme of GCSE subjects. The college has further plans, all of them carefully considered, to further enhance the curriculum.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

41. The overall provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Whilst provision for moral, social and cultural development is good, provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There is no overall whole-school planning for developing the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, there are missed opportunities in many areas of the college's work, especially in the area of spiritual development, and so the consistency of pupils' experience cannot be assured. The college does not provide an act of worship each day for every pupil and therefore does not fulfil statutory requirements in this respect. However, there are regular assemblies which provide valuable experiences for pupils; some offer opportunities for reflection, but others do not offer this dimension despite the potential that is often there to do so. Except in religious education, most of the opportunities in subjects arise spontaneously or as the result of individual initiatives; the experiences of pupils are, therefore, variable and very limited. Religious education, however, does make an important contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. Here, pupils are provided with opportunities to consider matters beyond the material and the mundane and to appreciate some of life's more complex issues. For example, students in Year 12 were asked to consider whether the right to have a child is an absolute right or whether it depends on the situation. Pupils reflect on what their own beliefs are and how these are formed. In religious education there is very good emphasis on personal reflection and searching for meaning. An atmosphere has been created where pupils feel at ease when discussing personal and religious issues. It provides a model of good practice for the rest of the college of how an important dimension of the pupils' personal development can be fostered.
42. The provision for moral development is good. The great majority of pupils follows well-understood codes of conduct in class and around the school. Teachers and other adults in the college are good role models. Through occasions such as form time and assemblies, pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. Moral concerns are dealt with in many subjects of the curriculum and throughout the personal social and health education programme. Right and wrong are explored through, for example, religious education; observance of rules and fair play is fostered in physical education. In many cases, pupils are asked to consider differing views and to begin to formulate their own ideas.
43. The pupils' social development is good. There are many opportunities within lessons when pupils are able to work together in pairs and small groups. The large range of extra-curricular activities promotes social development. In the area of physical education, the college's Sports College status gives even greater opportunities than is usual for participation and social interaction during and outside the normal college day. There are many opportunities for social development through drama, dance and music. The college supports a number of charities giving opportunities for service and the development of citizenship. The sixth form regular visits to a Gambian school are particularly noteworthy examples of how the college is helping its students to become mature adults.
44. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils have opportunities to widen their horizons, celebrate their own culture, and explore new ones. The modern foreign languages department arranges effective exchanges and visits to several European countries and employs foreign language assistants. There are regular visits in art to museums and galleries, enhanced by an artist in residence and the display of the pupils' work in the local arts centre. A children's writer in residence has broadened the English curriculum. However, there are missed opportunities in some subject areas for pupils to study the wider aspects of life in a multicultural society and the multi-cultural nature of Britain today. For example, there are few examples in science of raising the pupils' awareness that scientific developments are the product of many cultures. Design & technology teachers do not encourage pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of others.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The college has effective systems in place to safeguard its pupils and ensure their welfare. There have been some improvements in its practice since the previous inspection. Child protection procedures are good with each site having a senior member of staff responsible with clear lines of communication in place. New members of staff have child protection training as part of their induction to the college. There are sufficient staff trained in first aid at the Beeches site, but not enough at the Green Lane site. Procedures for care of medicines, recording accidents and caring for pupils who are unwell are all in place and work effectively. Since the previous inspection the college has overhauled its health and safety systems. It is now the responsibility of a senior teacher who has re-written the policy to produce a good working document with clear areas of responsibility. Subject departments and individual teachers now have responsibility for health and safety, which has improved the college's practice. A full risk assessment was recently carried out and many points for action resulted from this, which the college is beginning to address. The college is aware of the problems posed by the split site and is mindful of the desirability, when funds permit, of improving security surveillance to enhance pupil safety.
46. Pupils are registered properly every morning; sixth form students use a swipe card system. Absence notes are completed by teachers at the start of the afternoon session and later marked into registers by the administration staff, but the manual system is cumbersome and time consuming and makes the efficient tracking of attendance of both individuals and groups difficult. The procedures for improving attendance are sound; the education welfare officer works with senior staff to monitor those pupils with unsatisfactory attendance, and the college also does spot checks on year groups. But as attendance at lessons is not monitored methodical, there is no way of checking whether pupils always remain at the college during the day.
47. Procedures for managing behaviour are good. The college has clear rules of conduct and ensures that the pupils are aware of them by displaying them in all the classrooms. There is a draft behaviour policy which gives clear guidance to all those with responsibility for implementing and supporting it including the governing body, teachers, pupils and their parents. A behaviour consultant is available at times during the week to give support. The reward system of merits, which celebrate achievement and good behaviour, motivate particularly the younger pupils, who were very pleased to share these with the inspectors during the inspection. The policy also includes a clear step-by-step system to monitor and support pupils with less satisfactory behaviour. The system of 'Personal Best' cards helps to monitor an individual's behaviour and achievement within lessons throughout the college day and keeps the relevant teaching staff and parents well informed. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are monitored through a quality assurance system which tracks tutor groups across all subjects; this is another very useful system to support not only pupils but teachers as well. Despite the procedures, there is a minority of pupils whose unsatisfactory behaviour disrupts some lessons. They are not always dealt with either swiftly or effectively when classroom management is unsatisfactory.
48. The pupils' personal development is monitored and supported well, contributing significantly to the standards they reach. The system of houses, which is a feature of the college, does not always sit easily with the year group needs. However, the college now acknowledges this and is now working hard to ensure that the two systems are mutually supportive; for example, heads and deputy heads of house now have a year group responsibility as well. The college is aware of the importance of the role of the tutor and, to this end, has recently introduced a structured programme of tutor training in Year 7 to improve tutors skills. This is good and a necessary improvement, as some of the tutor sessions seen during the inspection, particularly in Key Stage 4, were of little value and a waste of time; one weakness is that tutor sessions are not monitored formally enough. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to meet with their tutor every year for a formal interview to discuss their targets and the progress they are making. Targets are reviewed termly and set out in the pupils' planners; this is good, but pupils do not feel they were referred to enough. The college is very mindful of the need to offer its pupils appropriate support and employs a college counsellor who is able to offer pupils confidential advice. This is a strength of the pastoral system. Overall the pastoral system within the college is good; pupils receive good

guidance through the personal social and health education programme, and house, year and subject staff work hard together to ensure a better understanding of the pupils' needs.

49. The college's procedures for assessing the pupils' standards and rate of learning are good. A substantial amount of data is collected and recorded when they enter the college, including National Curriculum data at the age of 11 and information from cognitive ability tests. The information is made available to heads of house and subjects for use in establishing base-line assessment and the setting of targets for each pupil. The college recognises the importance of training teachers in developing assessment practice across departments, but systems are at an early stage of development and consequently there are inconsistencies in procedures across subjects. They are well established in subjects such as in modern foreign languages, the humanities subjects and art, but unsatisfactory in ICT where the procedures for recording the pupils' achievements are insufficiently developed to inform teachers about the progress pupils are making. As pupils progress through the college, information from assessment tasks linked to National Curriculum levels and target grades is recorded centrally on computer and in the pupils' diaries and is used to inform managers and parents about standards and progress made in subjects. Records of information on the pupils' personal development, such as attendance, are being recorded but the systems are at an early stage of development and not yet fully providing sufficient information in the setting of targets for improvement.
50. The use made of assessment in planning and monitoring the curriculum is satisfactory, though the quality of its use is variable. Good practice occurs in the humanities subjects where information from assessments is used to plan for the needs of pupils of different attainment; in mathematics, the review of GCSE answers has identified weaknesses that has led to planning additional practice, resulting in the raising of standards. In English at Key Stage 3, however, the information about the pupils' National Curriculum levels on entry to the college is insufficiently used to inform about the pupils' needs and learning targets. In other subjects the assessment process is at an early stage of development and is not being used to inform curriculum planning. The marking of the pupils' work is inconsistent in quality and regularity. Many teachers mark regularly, award of merits for effort, and make detailed and supportive comments which give encouragement that leads to improved performance. However, in some cases, there is too little marking, or it is superficial; as a result, pupils are less motivated, do not know what they need to do to improve, and, consequently, underachieve.
51. In the last inspection report, assessment procedures were described as satisfactory, but that insufficient guidance was given to ensure that practices were consistently applied across subjects. The procedures have improved and are now good, but the inconsistencies across subjects remain.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. Overall, parents have positive views of the college. Overall, the college has satisfactory links with parents. However, many parents voiced their concerns over a number of areas of the college's work, not only through the questionnaire, but also through many thoughtful and pertinent comments in letters. Parents are mainly concerned about the standard of the pupils' behaviour, the amount of homework their children receive, the information they receive on their children's progress, including arrangements for consulting with teachers, weaknesses in the ways the college works with parents, and the quality of some of the teaching. What pleases parents most is the enjoyment their children have in coming to the college, the good progress their children make, the approachability of the college when problems occur, the expectations that pupils will work hard, and the extra curricular activities on offer. Inspection evidence supports some instances where the concerns of parents are valid, but the inspectors believe that there is rapid improvement in some areas, although inconsistency in practice in others. The concerns about behaviour are not borne out by inspection evidence, although pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour were seen and need to be addressed.

53. One of the main vehicles to create positive links between the college and its parents is the student planner, which enables parents to keep track of their children's homework, achievements and targets. When used well, the planners are good, but they are not used consistently well across all the year groups, and so do not always create a meaningful dialogue between home and the college; often they remain unsigned and little evidence of comments passed between parents and tutors can be found. Most parents have good opportunities to meet with their children's tutor and subject teachers apart from parents of Year 9 pupils who have a meeting to discuss choices for G.C.S.E. This means that the parents of a pupil leaving Year 8 will not have a specific meeting with a subject teacher until the spring term of Year 10; this is not satisfactory and the concerns of parents about this are justified.
54. The involvement of parents with the work of the college is good. Each of the four houses has its own active Parent Teacher Association and there is also a whole college association. These groups fund raise and organise social activities to the benefit of pupils and college alike. There are also some good examples of parents being actively involved in different areas of the curriculum, such as helping with school productions, helping with rugby coaching and netball, and, in geography, involvement in discussing environmental issues; however, this type of help is not well developed throughout the college. The college involves parents at an early stage in any behavioural or attendance issues to ensure their support. The careers programme also involves parents well and they have the opportunity to share in their children's career interviews. There are good links with parents of pupils with special educational needs; the code of practice works well and pupils with a formal Statement of Educational Need get good provision; targets are reviewed regularly with both the pupils and their parents. Good documentation is kept and regulations regarding the conduct of annual reviews are met.
55. The quality of information provided for parents by the college on a day to day basis is good with a well presented newsletter which includes contributions by pupils; there is a detailed and attractive handbook and prospectus. However the annual report of the governing body has some items missing and does not meet statutory requirements, particularly in the way examination results are presented.
56. The parents' contribution to their children's learning at school and at home is good. They are a supportive body of parents who turn out in large numbers to parent consultation meetings, and who are concerned that their children should receive a regular and well managed homework programme. The inspectors agree with parents that there are too many variations in the amount, quality and timing of homework.
57. The quality of information for parents through the annual report is good. At Key Stage 3, National Curriculum levels are reported and helpful guidance is given to inform parents on their interpretation for most subjects, except for ICT where the National Curriculum level only is reported. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form parents are informed of standards reached against the national grading criteria for GCSE and A-level courses. The pupils' responses to their learning are also reported through an effort grade for each subject. Teachers write detailed and informative comments, though there are inconsistencies in the quality of writing both across and within subjects.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

58. There have been fundamental changes to the management of the college recently. Many of the senior management team, including the principal, have been appointed to their roles in the last one or two years. The changes are still in their early stages in terms of implementation and in their impact on standards in the college. The new structures, with an expanded management team, are giving the necessary cohesion and accountability to take a very large school on two sites forward, and to give the necessary support to other leaders to manage change. Many aspects of the new structures, and ways of working, are still evolving, and are at the stage that many well managed and successful schools were at several years ago. In time, they have the potential to reduce significantly the inconsistencies and some lack of rigour that have been brought about by working in relatively isolated compartments.

59. The principal and all the senior management team are providing good and clear direction for the work and development of the college. This is beginning to lead to more uniformly high standards. Relationships are generally very good, and there is a commitment to equal opportunities; however, there remains some gap between the college's aspirations set out in its prospectus and the variations in the pupils' experiences. A culture that recognises that the rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is the key to raising standards is not yet firmly embedded, though good practice is beginning to develop and is having an impact on standards.
60. Appraisal and performance management systems for teachers are being implemented as part of the strategies to raise standards; it is too early to judge the impact of these systems, and similar robust and developmental arrangements for non-teaching staff have yet to be implemented, a weakness recognised by the college. A longer term strategic plan to move the college forward is still evolving from the new principal's initial establishment of priorities and models for improvement. Department plans reflect these priorities and are reviewed, but this crucial area of the college's work, including the financial aspects of development planning, is not yet a strength.
61. The college is fortunate to have very committed and loyal teachers, many of whom have given many years of dedicated service to the college. There is a recognition amongst most of them that the college has not moved sufficiently forward in recent years. Inspectors note a willingness to change and to work cohesively together. The new management structures are creating the right conditions to support teachers and other staff in their professional development. Generally, heads of subject, heads of house and the special educational needs co-ordinator are allowed to exercise their delegated responsibility effectively. There are some weaknesses at middle management level, which are identified in other parts of the report, but, generally, the quality of middle management is good; the role of leaders at this level is fundamental to the future success of the college.
62. There have also been recent changes to the membership of the college's governing body and to its committee structure. There is now a close relationship between its committees and a member of the college's senior management team. This allows governors to exercise more effectively their roles in strategic planning and as critical friends. The close working relationship of the chairs of the committees is giving impetus to the key task of improving relations with the community and to facilitating strategies to raise attainment. Governors now have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses, and some are bringing a sharp external perspective to its work.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

63. There has been a considerable turnover of teachers over the last two years, and the college has found it difficult to recruit teachers in some areas of the curriculum, especially mathematics and modern foreign languages. Problems in appointing suitably qualified and experienced teachers in these two subjects earlier in the college year has had an adverse impact on the education of some pupils. These staffing difficulties have now eased and the college is taking all the steps it can to ensure greater continuity of teaching for pupils in the future. However, overall the college has sufficient qualified and experienced staff to teach the curriculum effectively, and to meet the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs. The provision for staffing in the physical education department is particularly good because of the Sports College status, enabling it, for example, to provide specialist teaching in local primary schools and more time for teachers to develop their professional skills.
64. The college is well served by its support staff, although insufficient technical support in design & technology has an adverse impact on the quality of provision. At present, the staffing structure for support staff is under-developed, but the college is currently reviewing its arrangements in this area.
65. The college has made improvements in its accommodation since the last inspection report. However, many issues still need to be resolved. Overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory and it

constrains the standards of achievement and progress of pupils. There are examples of good accommodation which enhances learning opportunities. For example, accommodation for music is very good. There is a small concert hall on the Beeches site with purpose built acoustics and adjoining recording studio; the music classrooms are large and the five practice rooms are well equipped with keyboards and a digital piano. Music accommodation at the Green Lane site is also good with two large classrooms and well-equipped practice rooms. All vocational education courses are taught on the Beeches site where there is a good range of rooms to meet need of different situations required in vocational education. Rooms can be used flexibly and for a range of purposes, for example, board meetings and role play. There is easy access for students studying vocational education courses to use computers. There are good features of accommodation for physical education such as the sports hall, artificial playing area and swimming pool; however, changing accommodation is frequently insufficient to meet the need of numbers timetabled to take part to change at the same time, causing time to be lost from lessons, and the absence of a dance studio constrains the development of the dance curriculum. In science, the laboratories are of a poor quality, which inhibits learning. The site services manager and site supervisor work hard in order to keep the building in a reasonable state of repair within the budgetary constraints. Despite a rolling programme of decoration and refurbishment, many of the rooms used for the teaching of English are shabby; they have flaking paint and crumbling plaster and old dirty carpets. The main hall is drab and unimaginatively decorated; it and many other areas do not provide stimulating environments. On the Beeches site storage of three-dimensional artwork is problematical. Art rooms are cramped and not suitably adapted for art, for example, no sinks are available; there are also holes in the walls. Accommodation for the learning development department is adequate but becomes cramped when the department is busy. During the week of the inspection, classrooms on the Beeches site were not sufficiently heated.

66. The major issue affecting pupils and teachers in all subjects is the location of the two buildings. Whilst having more than one site in a very large school is not, in itself, a disadvantage, the inappropriate distribution of space and facilities between the two sites means that the college is cannot make the best use of the buildings. Despite the college's efforts to make the most effective use it can of the buildings, there are more than desirable amounts of movement between the sites. The present impossibility of concentrating all Key Stage 3 teaching on one site is the main reason why, overall, the college's accommodation is unsatisfactory. The path between the two sites is eight hundred metres long and parts are in a poor state of repair, which presents a hazard. Pupils and teachers use this route to move between the two sites. The impact of the movement on teachers and pupils, especially in Year 9, causes losses of time and affects all subjects, and causes stresses and strains to pupils and teachers alike. The college has reduced the effect of the split site through timetable blocking in order to facilitate movement largely at break times, but all these accommodation problems adversely affect the quality of education at the college, particularly the loss of curriculum time. Without a substantial building and refurbishment programme, there is no straightforward solution to the accommodation issues and the negative impact on the pupils' education that these problems bring.
67. Most subjects have sufficient resources to support their work. Allocations are equitable and according to an agreed formula with appropriate weightings to take account of the differing nature of subjects. In addition, there is a clear system for subjects to bid for further resources to support new developments that are planned. There is a good range of resources to support music, physical education and the various vocational education programmes. In most other subjects, there is a satisfactory level of resources to support existing work. There is, however, a shortage of text books in English and mathematics. Overall the college has insufficient resources to adequately support the information and communication technology work. Current numbers of computers mean that several subjects have difficulty in gaining access to them when they require it. This is also the case in the learning development area for pupils with special educational needs where, although there is a wide selection of resources generally, the shortage of computers means that small groups of six or eight pupils must be booked into another venue when individual access to a computer is required. Several computers also operate slowly on the college network and are coming towards the end of their useful life. The design & technology department is also short of equipment to support the work in computer aided design and manufacture. There is a well resourced and good careers library available at the Beeches site.

Efficiency

68. Although the costing of curriculum plans has been well established for several years, there has not been a complete overview of the college's finances. Serious problems of overspending have had to be addressed in the recent past. There is now a much more coherent approach to the costing of development plans in relation to the college's priorities. An assistant principal and the finance officer are now providing that necessary focus and are taking a more global view of financial priorities and expenditure. As a result, financial accountability is more secure than it used to be. The newly adopted and thorough scheme of financial delegation requires the governors' committees to monitor spending during the year. The financial management systems are good, though some small discrepancies found by inspectors between information available to financial and curriculum managers show that improvements to the computer systems used in the college's administration are still needed. Similarly, although the principles of best value are applied, there is a need for a greater sophistication in their application. Specific grants that come to the college, including Sports College money, are used entirely appropriately.
69. Funding for the college includes elements to cover its two sites, and it receives additional funding as specific grants, including those for its role as a Sports College. Because of the split site and the nature of the buildings, the college spends more than average on premises and administrative staff, and less than average on teachers. However, the funding levels do mean that the ratio of pupils to teachers is slightly below average and the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom is around the average for secondary schools. Spending on resources for learning is broadly average, but, despite much spending on computers, there are inadequate numbers of modern computers to support the needs of the curriculum. The balance carried forward in the college's budget is almost entirely related to funds for the artificial turf pitch and pitch drainage projects, and will be spent in the current financial year. Whilst there is now a better view of financial priorities and development needs, inadequacies in the number and quality of computers and in the accommodation, despite considerable expenditure in each area, highlight the necessity for a medium to long term strategic financial plan, stringent application of the principles of best value, and great clarity in determining educational priorities.
70. Overall, the college has an income per pupil that is higher than average, but it also has non-educational costs that are higher than average and spending for the sports college for activities not directly for present pupils during the college day. Direct spending per pupil is broadly average. Pupils leave the college with results that are above average, and better than would be expected from their attainments when they arrive at the college. However, comparisons with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances are less favourable, and there is some evidence of underachievement, especially at Key Stage 4 and, particularly, amongst boys. The learning environment is very good in terms of relationships, but has weaknesses in terms of accommodation and some resources. The sixth form is a particularly strong feature of the college. It is cost effective, and is a large, happy and harmonious community; the students are appreciative of the opportunities available and enjoy being there. There is a clear vision on how the sixth form can develop further and improve further; it is well managed, and has the potential to be even more effective. Overall, the college is judged to provide sound value for money. However, with recent changes being implemented, the college as a whole also has the capacity and potential to improve its effectiveness further, and, therefore, further improve the value for money it provides.

71. WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The numbers after each issue refer to the relevant paragraph in the report.

- (1) Take steps to ensure that all teachers always have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve, by :
 - a) developing further a rigorous and regular programme of lesson observation and feedback at whole college and subjects levels;
 - b) ensuring that the best of existing practice is shared and promoted throughout the college;
 - c) improving the shortcomings in some areas of the quality of marking and homework;
 - d) analysing more rigorously assessment data to determine accurately what aspects of learning have gone well and what not so well, and taking appropriate action.
(3, 10, 11, 17, 21-26, 47, 49, 50, 59, 61, 76, 77, 85, 87, 95, 97, 107, 114, 121, 127, 131, 134, 136, 142, 147, 159, 160)

- (2) Improve the provision for ICT, by :
 - a) ensuring that all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements are met;
 - b) improving the management of ICT to ensure that all pupils receive equally high quality amounts of teaching and opportunities in ICT;
 - c) increasing the number of modern computers in the college both for specialist teaching and for use in subject areas;
 - d) co-ordinating more effectively the use of ICT across the college.
(9, 28, 49, 57, 67, 69, 75, 86, 94, 97, 118, 122, 124-128, 148)

- (3) Take every possible step to improve the accommodation of the college, by :
 - a) working closely with the local education authority at every opportunity to develop a realistic vision of the accommodation needs of the college, and taking all possible action towards achieving them;
 - b) taking a whole college view of possible ways of enhancing the present environment;
 - c) continuing to invest in improvements to the buildings within overall budgetary considerations.
(27, 65, 66, 77, 96, 101, 148)

- (4) Strengthen the college's partnership with parents and the community, by :
 - a) identifying all possible ways of consulting with parents about the future direction of the college, its relationships with parents, and their expectations of the college;
 - b) giving every opportunity to parents and members of the community to see the college at work in its normal activities;
 - c) setting, in consultation with parents and, if possible, representatives of the community, targets by which to measure the effectiveness of the partnership.
(52-57, 59)

- (5) Improve provision for the pupils' spiritual development, by :
 - a) developing a whole college policy to cover the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with particular reference to their spiritual development;
 - b) identifying all possible opportunities for promoting spiritual development in subject areas, in assemblies and collective worship, in the college environment, and in all aspects of the college's life;
 - c) devising appropriate training for teachers to encourage their contribution to this area of the college's provision.
(41, 96, 117, 148)

In addition, governors should consider including other areas where there are some weaknesses when drawing up the action plan. These are : the implementation of a numeracy policy (31, 89); meeting all statutory requirements in the governors' annual report to parents, particularly those related to the publication of examination results (55); religious education for all students in the sixth form (30, 154).

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	209
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5.3	22.5	40.7	29.2	2.4	0	0

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

Information about the college's pupils

Pupils on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the college's roll	1422	364
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	82	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	307	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24

Pupil mobility in the last college year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	60
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	85

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	6.3
National comparative data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	1.4
National comparative data	1.0

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
	2000	150	141	291

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	101	115	116
	Girls	110	106	93
	Total	211	221	209
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	73 (70)	76 (74)	72 (62)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	27 (30)	53 (45)	35 (23)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	111	91
	Girls	106	103	92
	Total	192	214	183
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	66 (70)	74 (69)	63 (73)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	32 (32)	50 (41)	20 (34)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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
	2000	139	151	290

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	70	131	136
	Girls	99	143	148
	Total	169	274	284
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	College	58 (55)	94 (92)	98 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	College	40.0 (40.3)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	66	80	146

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	17.4	18.9	18.2 (14.4)	1.2	3.4	2.7 (3.1)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	College	37
	National	73.2

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	College	0	n/a
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	4
Indian	6
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	8
White	1751
Any other minority ethnic group	8

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	27	2
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)	109.55
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.39

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	38
Total aggregate hours worked per week	861

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.3
Key Stage 4	21.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	5162290
Total expenditure	4950672
Expenditure per pupil	2795
Balance brought forward from previous year	119948
Balance carried forward to next year	331566

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1786
Number of questionnaires returned	424

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	58	9	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	52	11	3	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	50	19	6	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	52	23	9	3
The teaching is good.	15	63	11	3	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	47	25	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	47	13	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	48	9	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	17	44	27	6	5
The school is well led and managed.	16	50	10	3	21
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	58	10	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	51	8	3	6

Other issues raised by parents

137 parents made written comments, a higher proportion than is usual in secondary schools. Many comments were detailed and very well reasoned, highlighting concerns, whilst acknowledging strengths. As well as elaborating on their answers to the questionnaires, many wrote of the problems of staffing shortages and absences. Their other major concerns relate to inconsistencies in teaching, marking and homework, and to issues about communications with parents and the community. Many explained that they were not yet able to express an opinion of the college's leadership and management as many of the senior managers, including the principal, were new appointments to their posts.

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

ENGLISH

72. The pupils' standards on entry are broadly in line with the national average. At the end of Key Stage 3, their results in the national tests in 2000 are above the national average, though below average when compared with schools with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. Taking the five years from 1996 to 2000, the performance of pupils in English has been a little below the national average. The standards of boys and girls are broadly similar. Taking the three years from 1998 to 2000 the boys' performance was somewhat above, and the girls' somewhat below, the national average, and results in English are lower than those in mathematics and science. In the 2000 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils obtaining passes at grades A*-C in English and English Literature is above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the results are also above the national average. Trends over time show that overall standards in English are above the national average. Results of both girls and boys in English for grades A*-C is above the national average and broadly in line with the national average for grades A*-G, though the girls' results in English Literature at grades A*-C are well above the national average. Overall, there are no significant gender differences in English results, and pupils tend to do as well in English as they do in their other subjects. Results at A-level in English Literature are above the national average from a large number of entries. This marks a higher standard than would be expected based on the students' attainments at GCSE.
73. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly average. In relation to their standards on entry, which are lower than those in the other core subjects, most pupils are making good progress, and, therefore achieving well. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are well supported and integrated into lessons; as a result, they are achieving well, in line with other pupils. Both boys and girls are achieving equally well. High attaining pupils produce accurate and consistent written work. Extended creative writing is a strong feature, as is the improvement in basic skills of all pupils. A minority of low attaining pupils produces written work that lacks consistent accuracy, and pupils with special educational needs exhibit weaknesses in technical accuracy and expression. The use of a word processor improves the presentation of work of many of these pupils. Most pupils read widely and there are many books made available to them; high attainers, who read a good range of classical literature, are knowledgeable and analytical in their work. Pupils of average attainments read authoritatively and are able to compare and contrast varying texts; lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, develop a greater fluency and expression over time, thereby increasing their confidence and understanding. The use of the first ten minutes of Key Stage 3 lessons for literacy produces a calm and ordered start to lessons, which allows pupils to focus on their work and appreciate the importance of reading, silent study and contemplation. Speaking and listening skills are broadly in line with the expected level. High attaining pupils answer questions fully and discuss issues with verve and authority. Occasionally, the use of language in speaking is inappropriate, showing a lack of awareness of the situation and audience. A keen emphasis on drama develops the speaking and listening skills of the majority of pupils by its emphasis on meaningful communication skills and a respect for situation, audience and personal development.
74. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work seen are above the national average. The work of most pupils continues to improve and represents good achievement. The tight focus on GCSE criteria in setting targets helps to ensure these above average achievements. All read and understand Shakespeare and are exposed to the full range of the National Curriculum, so pupils are thoroughly prepared for coursework and the examination. Texts are studied with a keen understanding of historical context, and high attainers, in particular, use this learning to achieve well. The ability of all pupils to place texts successfully in an historical context improves standards. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were able to analyse the poetry in 'To a Coy Mistress' in a sophisticated way, speaking with cogency and flair. Writing is closely focused on the GCSE criteria and, for a large majority of pupils, is detailed and accurate. High attaining pupils produce

refined and mature written work. All pupils use drafting and re-drafting skills to hone their work, but some low attainers do not re-draft as successfully as high and middle attaining pupils. Their work, consequently, lacks development and refinement. All pupils read and understand the set texts plus a wide range of non-literary material. Speaking and listening skills are well developed and most pupils speak with care and a keen sense of their audience.

75. At A-level, standards of work seen are above the national average. Students display high quality speaking and listening skills with maturity and intellectual rigour. Written work is reasoned, exciting and well researched. Students read widely and communicate their love of literature in both written and oral work. Their attitude to work is very positive; they are highly motivated, caring individuals; as a result, they are achieving very well.
76. Literacy levels in English are good. A stress on basic skills, grammar and mechanical accuracy improves the standards of the majority of pupils. The global English initiative is also beginning to raise standards for all pupils. ICT skills used in English are good, and effective use is made of computers to improve the presentation of all the pupils' work, particularly that of low attainers. At Key Stage 4 and at A-level, good use is made of ICT to aid the presentation of coursework. There is less opportunity for development at Key Stage 3 because of limited access to the computer rooms.
77. Overall, teaching is good; in some cases, it is very good and outstanding. One of the strengths of teaching is the clear targeting, which is shared with the pupils; therefore, pupils are challenged, know precisely what to aim for, and are taught how to achieve their personal best. Other strengths include the detailed specialist knowledge of the teachers, their positive relationships with the pupils and the well planned briskly paced lessons. A very good Year 9 lesson used a well planned range of activities, including discussion, probing questioning and written work, to prepare pupils for an examination question on 'Twelfth Night'. Lower attainers worked well with the support of a learning support assistant, who had liaised with the teacher in the planning of the lesson. This resulted in unobtrusive support which enabled these pupils to comprehend, and successfully complete, a model examination answer to a satisfactory standard. Most pupils prepared and annotated scene notes before completing the question, and deepened their understanding and knowledge of the play. High attainers were able to read and understand Shakespearean rhythm and intonation, and write about it eloquently and precisely. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, pupils were clearly directed in their approach to examination questions, and the teacher had high expectations, giving pupils examples of high grade work, and showing pupils how to work to achieve those highest grades. Use of appropriate, visually stunning photographs brought the lesson alive and focused the minds of the awe-struck pupils. A very good Year 13 lesson used high quality questioning, and sensitive drawing out of the students' knowledge and interpretation, to elicit meaningful characterisations of the text and essay writing skills. In most lessons, teachers manage the pupils' behaviour very well and this produces a businesslike atmosphere conducive to good learning. In these lessons, pupils are challenged and expected to give of their best. A small proportion of lessons is less successful, particularly at Key Stage 3. In these lessons, the management of pupils is less strong and they are insufficiently structured tasks to meet the needs of the pupils. As a result, some pupils are not on task for parts of the lesson, and do not complete sufficient work and do not learn as much as they should.
78. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Extra curricular activities, such as academic achievement classes, the debating society, theatre and cinema visits, and creative writing workshops, are numerous and welcomed by the pupils, contributing to their enjoyment and appreciation of English. The best assessment is constructive, diagnostic and informs the pupils' progress; as a result, pupils know what level they have reached and what they need to do to improve their standards. However, ongoing assessment is inconsistent and requires development in a minority of lessons because some pupils do not understand what their best work is, and some marking is not up to date. The pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall, and contribute to their progress, except in a small minority of lessons at Key Stage 3 where, because of poor management of their behaviour by teachers, the pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory. Leadership of the department is sound; the subject teachers respect and value their head of department. His enthusiasm for English is infectious. Departmental documentation

is thorough; therefore, all teachers are able to adopt a consistent approach to teaching, and are aware of the philosophy and aims of the subject, along with an appreciation of methods to improve the pupils' standards. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, as part of the processes to raise standards further, is not easy over two sites, and the department recognises this as an area for future development. However, observation of teaching is developing, and the department will benefit from mutual classroom observation of good practice and the rigorous analysis of successful and less successful teaching. Accommodation is unsatisfactory; because teachers do not have base classrooms to store materials, much time and effort are used transporting materials and resources, which are also vulnerable to loss when left in rooms. Teachers sometimes have to move between sites without a break; as a result, some classes lose a small part of their lesson time. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards are improving and strategies to improve the standards of boys have been successful, with little difference now in the standards attained by boys and girls.

Drama

79. The teaching of drama at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form provides further depth and breadth to the curriculum. Strong links with the sports college contribute to an emerging arts programme which is exciting and innovative. Plans to incorporate drama at Key Stage 3 will further enhance the curriculum. Drama teaching at the college is very good, and incorporates a wide range of teaching and learning styles, which clearly develops the learning of the pupils. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the pupils. The specialist drama teacher is committed to the subject and has a clear vision and direction for the future. Teaching is well paced and controlled; as a result, pupils learn very well in a challenging environment. It concentrates on the achievement of the pupils by realistic appraisal and encouragement, which raise expectations. This creates a celebratory atmosphere where the teacher and the pupils expect high standards, and enjoy realizing them. All teaching and learning are very good, combining the verve and enthusiasm of the teachers and pupils with detailed knowledge and understanding aimed at developing the pupils' personal and academic achievement. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, the empathy and technical skill by which the pupils conveyed bereavement was very moving. Learning is good because lessons are well prepared and proceed at a brisk pace. Good teaching methods enable all pupils to gain the maximum insight into the subject as well as gaining knowledge of a wide range of sophisticated dramatic skills. Work seen during the inspection indicates improving standards and good achievement. The pupils' self-confidence, independent learning and literacy skills are also enhanced. The range of extra-curricular activities, such as school productions involving nearly all subjects and the community, the youth theatre, theatre visits and visiting theatre groups, is outstanding.

Literacy

80. As a result of work across the college, literacy levels are satisfactory. The learning development department emphasises the development of literacy skills by withdrawing pupils with limited skills for more intensive work to improve their basic skills. Evidence from the inspection does indicate improving standards of literacy as pupils reach Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Speaking and listening skills in some lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, require development as pupils do not always speak with an awareness of audience or situation. Reading standards are appropriate in the vast majority of subjects, although pupils need to read and research more widely in some areas. Writing skills require continued input from all departments in order to further improve mechanical accuracy and extend specialist vocabulary. There is evidence of mature, sophisticated speaking and listening skills, particularly in the sixth form. Similarly, reading and writing skills show coherence, interest and accuracy, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Examples were noted of systematic developments in specialist vocabulary in English and science. The mathematics department is making strenuous efforts to increase the literacy levels of the pupils.

MATHEMATICS

81. There have been difficulties in both the recruitment and retention of teaching staff for mathematics during the present academic year. This has resulted in an unusually high number of staff changes, which have caused a number of timetable amendments in order to make the best possible use of the teachers' experience and capabilities. The impact on individual pupils has varied according to which class they are in. In general, pupils on the lower school site have been affected more by these changes, because of the priority given to older pupils with public examinations during the year. The permanent members of the department have taken additional classes and have worked particularly hard to help overcome the difficulties, and standards remain high. The position is now relatively stable, with appropriately qualified and experienced staff in post, and with planning for additional recruitment well advanced.
82. The pupils' standards in mathematics on entry to the school are broadly in line with the national average. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the average points scores for both boys and girls are above the national averages, indicating an above average rate of improvement and good achievement. The proportion of pupils gaining level 6 or higher is well above the national figure. Results are in line with those obtained by pupils in similar schools. Overall results in mathematics are slightly better than those in science and better than those in English. Mathematics results are better than both science and English when comparing results with those in similar schools. Results over the last three years have shown an upward trend, with the overall results in mathematics in 2000 the best so far obtained.
83. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C is well above the national average; the proportion gaining grades A*-G is above the national figure. When compared with the results these pupils obtained at the end of Key Stage 3, there has been an average rate of improvement. The girls' results show a greater improvement than the boys'. The results obtained by pupils in mathematics are broadly in line with those they obtain in other subjects. There has been an upward trend in results in the last three years; the proportion of pupils gaining grade A*-C is nearly 60 per cent, and the highest yet gained by the school.
84. In the sixth form, results in 2000 in A-level mathematics are well above the national averages for both the proportion gaining grades in the range A/B and also A/E. Nearly two thirds of the group obtained grade A or B, and all students entered gained a pass grade. There is also a 100 per cent pass rate in further mathematics, with a high proportion of A and B grades. Students perform well at A-level compared with the grades expected from their earlier GCSE results, and the overall A-level mathematics results are the best so far obtained. Students taking the modular mathematics course to improve their GCSE grades gain satisfactory results. The take-up for mathematics courses in the sixth form is consistently high.
85. In work seen during the inspection, standards in all key stages are above national expectations. This is particularly so in the sixth form where a high proportion of the work is of a very high standard. In Year 7, pupils are provided with challenging work from the start; there is a good balance between the attainment targets in the National Curriculum. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. By Year 8, higher attaining pupils confidently apply Pythagoras' rule in right angled triangles in order to calculate the length of the third side; they clearly understand the terms 'square' and 'square root'. In another class, however, though pupils worked hard, too much time was spent on the unnecessary repetition of the measurement of angles using a protractor. This was not sufficiently challenging, and, as a result, only the faster workers in the class progressed to the more difficult topics. Lower attaining pupils make good progress; they can name seven special quadrilaterals, and learn to distinguish between them by constructing them from lengths of plastic. By Year 9, pupils use graphical calculators to display graphs of algebraic functions, and clearly enjoy predicting and observing the results. The pupils' achievements throughout Key Stage 3 are good. In Years 10 and 11, 'fast-track' groups make particularly good progress, and take their GCSE examinations early. Pupils of all levels of attainment work confidently when planning individual investigations. The pupils' achievements in general in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory. They are provided with frequent opportunities to improve their non-calculator work, as this has been identified as an area requiring additional practice. Achievements in the sixth form are very good, with students working well throughout each lesson. They show

flair and persistence in A-level lessons on differential equations and partial fractions. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils in their year group; they are given additional help and encouragement when required. Their teachers are often unaware of their specific targets, however. These do not at present include targets for improving their level of numeracy.

86. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3, satisfactory in Key Stage 4, and very good in the sixth form. Some very good teaching occurs in each key stage. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. A strength of teaching is the confident relationship which exists between teachers and pupils. This means that a positive learning atmosphere develops in each classroom. Planning is very thorough, and often contains a numeracy starter to the lesson. Furthermore, in the best lessons, teachers give pupils an outline of the objectives for the lesson, to provide impetus, and then revisit these at the end to see how far they have been achieved. This develops a sense of teachers and pupils learning together, and enjoying doing so. Teachers are adept at using question and answer sessions, and in using praise; this keeps pupils involved, and provides encouragement for them. One of the weaknesses in teaching is a tendency for teachers to talk for too long when introducing the lesson, leaving insufficient time for pupils to learn by doing, and by using their own initiative. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 4, and restricts the overall progress which pupils make. Pupils at all levels of attainment respond well to the positive approach by teachers. A lower attaining group in Year 11 concentrated well for the whole lesson when revising work on prime factors and number sequences, clearly responding to the enthusiasm shown by their teacher; by the end of the lesson they can work out the rule for each sequence, and they also learn how to devise its formula. A lower set in Year 9 worked particularly well when calculating co-ordinates and plotting graphs; they readily ask for help when unsure of how to proceed, and are provided with very good support from both the teacher and the support assistant. In the sixth form, A-level lessons involve a lively exchange of views between students and teachers, resulting in a buoyant learning atmosphere. There are some excellent examples of thorough marking of the pupils' work, including written comments about how to improve. In general, however, the routine marking of the pupils' work is infrequent, and there are inconsistencies across the department in the method of grading.
87. Teachers are aware of the need to contribute to the development of the pupils' literacy skills. On the lower school site, in particular, there is an effective display of key words in classrooms, and in the best lessons, these are repeated by the teacher when they are introduced, and also in the lesson summary. Opportunities for original writing are provided when pupils undertake their investigations. The integration of ICT into the curriculum is not yet complete. There is, therefore, some inconsistency in the use of computers by pupils as they progress through the school. The head of department is aware of the need for additional training, so that all pupils in each year group receive their entitlement in this important area. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, there is regular practice in the use of number, without the use of a calculator. Pupils are accustomed to this routine, and are keen to succeed with the mental challenge. The level of numeracy skills in general is therefore good, and one of the benefits is that pupils are becoming less reliant on calculators.
88. The leadership and management of this large department are good. The sense of teamwork is very high, and the teachers show a high level of commitment to their work, and to the continued improvement in standards. The head of department is relatively inexperienced, but shows enthusiasm and a determination to succeed. Because of the number of staff changes, she has had less time than normal to devote to longer term planning. Development planning, therefore, is incomplete, and lacks a vision for the future. Those priorities which have been identified are not accurately costed, and there is insufficient delegation of responsibility for their implementation to other members of the department. Furthermore, there has been insufficient monitoring of the work of the department, in particular of teaching and the marking of the pupils' work. The head of department is aware of the importance of senior staff in the department increasing the time devoted to monitoring.
89. Since the last inspection, the pupils' attainment in national tests and examinations has improved at all levels. The upward trend is greater than the national trend. Pupils continue to work well in

groups, and in class they listen carefully to their teachers and to one another. In spite of the number of changes, the standard of teaching has been maintained. Of the three key issues identified, the department has made satisfactory progress with the improvement of numeracy skills, and has begun to develop the systematic monitoring of teaching through the scheme of performance management. There is still an urgent need to improve the quality and frequency of the marking of the pupils' work, and the recording of progress. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress. For the future, priorities include more stability in staffing with the recruitment of additional well-qualified teaching staff. This will permit the wider deployment of the more senior staff, and help to reduce the unacceptably high number of classes which have more than one mathematics teacher during the course of a week. There is also a need to focus on the further improvement of teaching skills, consistency of practice in the use of information and communication technology, and the improvement of the accommodation on the upper school site.

Numeracy

90. The standard of numeracy in the school is good, though there is some inconsistency in its application. There is regular practice in mathematics lessons, and opportunities in most other subject areas to develop the use of number. In science, pupils in Year 10 calculate bond energies, and the graphical presentation of data, and its analysis, is particularly good. In design & technology, pupils calculate the values of the resistors required in electronics circuits, and good spatial awareness is utilised in graphics classes in Key Stage 4. In sociology classes, students in Year 12 analyse and discuss the implications of data about marriage and the levels of divorce. There are, however, missed opportunities to include problem solving in the travel and tourism course. Particularly effective use of numeracy was seen in geography classes. For instance, A-level students use algebraic equations in the study of river flow, and traffic surveys are used in GCSE coursework. Pupils in general do not rely too heavily on the use of calculators, but where it is appropriate, they use them accurately.

SCIENCE

91. The pupils' standards on entry are broadly average. The 2000 national tests, taken by pupils aged fourteen at the end of Key Stage 3, show that pupils improve their attainment to an above average level. This has been the case for the past four years. However, compared with similar schools, performance last year is below average. The boys have achieved slightly better results than the girls in four out of the past five years. The national test results are somewhat better than those in English in the college but not as high as in mathematics. Since the last inspection results have fallen a little below the national trend. Overall, these results indicate that pupils make a good start in the college and are achieving well.
92. Standards overall at GCSE are above average. In 2000, most pupils took double award science at GCSE with some, mostly lower attaining students, taking single science together with horticulture and agriculture. The proportions of pupils attaining GCSE double science at both grades A* to C and A* to G is well above the national average, although a smaller proportion than normal chose to do this option. The results have varied in recent years over a modest range. The percentage of girls who achieved A*-C grades is higher than the boys showing that some boys underachieve. Standards in single science are below average with the percentage of pupils achieving an A*-C grade being around one half of the national average. The pupils' standards in agriculture and horticulture in 2000 are well below average; the same pupils generally achieve lower grades in this subject than in single award science. These results mean that pupils make sound strides overall from the age of fourteen with higher attaining pupils doing well, and boys and the lower attaining pupils underachieving.

93. Standards at A level are above average with some students taking biology, chemistry or physics adding particularly good value on their performance at GCSE, representing very good achievement. The 2000 results are the best the college has ever had. The numbers now taking A-level sciences are very healthy and growing, with a low drop out rate. Around two fifths of students achieve the highest A/B grades, whilst many other students achieve results commensurate with their GCSE performance. The results are strong in all subjects; this is not often the case in similar schools.
94. At the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards of work seen are above the expected level. However, there is scope to further improve on the numbers of pupils who reach the higher levels of attainment. For example in a Year 9 class nearly all pupils knew that light travels in straight lines and could measure angles of incidence and refraction in a glass block, but not all used the correct conventions whilst drawing light rays on diagrams. The level of competence when carrying out practical work is high, but scrutiny of work shows that their development of whole investigations is held back until the latter part of the key stage. In many lessons good thinking skills are fostered; a telling example was seen in a Year 7 class, where pupils quickly identified patterns in their results and were able use this to predict how the trend might continue. Work seen at Key Stage 4 is above average overall; in GCSE double and triple science classes is focused towards the higher grades, challenging the pupils to achieve at a high level. For example, in a chemistry lesson pupils could quickly grasp the idea that bond making and breaking leads to exothermic and endothermic energy changes; in biology they can use new ideas about the structure of the human lungs to explain how they are ventilated. Practical work in a foundation level double science class was undertaken productively, and pupils readily grasped the idea of variation. However, there was little opportunity for pupils to plan the work independently and note taking was not independently done. Standards of scientific knowledge and understanding in single science are below average with pupils showing only a rudimentary awareness of the structure and function of different parts of the eye. In agricultural science, standards are low, with pupils showing the ability to follow practical instructions and construct a simple table of the properties of soil; these are skills usually learnt at a much younger age. Whole investigations at GCSE are generally undertaken well, with close adherence to the examination rubric; pupils show good planning skills and can and evaluate their results in detail. Standards of work in the sixth form are above average. The work seen reflects the variety, rigour and challenge that teachers plan into their teaching. Some teachers help pupils develop independent approaches of note taking. Pupils come to science lessons with sound literacy skills but although key words are often identified, scientific literacy is unsystematically developed. Numeracy skills are strong throughout the subject. There is particularly good graphical work and calculations are undertaken in appropriate topics. Pupils are sometimes reluctant to do mental calculations. The weakness in the use of ICT in lessons identified at the last inspection remains with limited use seen in lessons or evident from class books.
95. The good working atmosphere and positive working relationships reported at the last inspection remain. Many pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject, and these often blossom as they move towards GCSE and A level examinations, enabling them to achieve well. Many are very keen to work hard, behave very well and get on diligently with the work that is set. The sixth form students, in particular, show high levels of motivation. Some boys at Key Stage 4 show restlessness in lessons and a lack of attention and this has an adverse effect on their learning and achievements.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is good at all key stages and has improved a little since the last inspection. There is the capacity to raise it still further. The biology teachers are spearheading new methods in the classroom, which, when they work well, are having a very positive impact on the pupils' learning and standards of attainment. Good practice abounds but it is infrequently brought together in any one lesson. Sixth form teaching is based on a thorough understanding of the subject rubric and delivered enthusiastically with expert subject knowledge strongly influencing standards. For example, in a Year 13 biology lesson, the detailed and incisive discussion on the structure of DNA and how base pairs work was helped by the teacher's knowledgeable delivery, and good overhead transparency resources. In a Year 13 physics lesson, strong teaching was enabling students to work independently on a range of exciting practical

investigations. In GCSE triple and double science classes teaching generally has a good level of challenge and is pitched well to suit the high ability of the pupils. Good examples of this include Year 10 and 11 physics lessons where the teachers used well chosen analogies to help pupils understand how electrical circuits work; the teaching had a clear focus on the key ideas and was not clouded by extraneous detail. The teaching of lower attaining pupils in Year 10 single science worked well because there was excellent liaison with the learning support assistant and the sequential teaching of interesting activities. In a Year 10 GNVQ lesson, six very clear objectives were shared with the pupils and very good attention to health and safety needs enabled the pupils to undertake their practical work competently. A CASE lesson in Year 8 was very well prepared and encouraged the pupils to think hard about how forces in a wheelbarrow are related proportionally to each other. The best and most consistent teaching was seen in Year 7 and 8 classes taught by the same teacher, teaching outside her subject specialism. The pupils were learning about electrical circuits. It was exceptionally strong because the learning outcomes for the lesson were shown on an overhead projector; and so pupils had a crystal clear idea of what they were aiming to know and understand by the end of the lesson. These also allowed the teacher to check exactly what the pupils had achieved in the last few minutes of the lesson. Teaching was conducted at a brisk pace and no time was wasted. The work was pitched at a challenging level and pupils of differing abilities were given the resources to work hard and see success. Praise was used effectively, which spurred the pupils to do even better. There was a good variety of teacher and pupil-led activities, which encouraged involvement and enjoyment. Scientific conventions were taught correctly and work built steadily on what had been learnt before. Overall, there are some general weaknesses in teaching which impair the quality of learning and the standards pupils achieve. Lesson ends are generally not as strong as lesson starts partly because many teachers are still getting used to changes in lesson timing. However, this also reflect weaker planning or a lack of response to the learning taking place. Pupils are not developing enough independence in their learning because teaching is sometimes too over-directed, although opportunities for problem solving were evident as seen in Year 7 where pupils built series and parallel electrical circuits. There is insufficient use of probing questions to help pupils explore understanding, develop oral explanations and to help teachers understand strengths and weaknesses in learning. The quality of marking remains inconsistent with few teachers making useful evaluative comments.

97. The subject is very well led and managed. Strengths and weaknesses of the department have been carefully identified and focus teams have been established to develop provision at each key stage. The roles and management skills of staff who are leading these initiatives needs to be clarified and enhanced. Some schemes of work have been upgraded but they are not all yet of a high quality. The quality of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is being improved and this is starting to have a good impact on standards. Here there is a good emphasis on developing thinking skills and practical activities but there is too much testing and not a strong enough emphasis on whole investigations in all years. The introduction of the triple science course for the higher attaining pupils and foundation level GNVQ course for some lower attaining pupils are providing better challenge and more appropriate pathways to examinations at sixteen. The curriculum weaknesses are that there is not an appropriate science GNVQ course in the sixth form, there are few extra-curricular opportunities and opportunities for science to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are unplanned. Although two laboratories on the Beeches site have recently been upgraded, the overall accommodation here remains poor and has a negative impact on standards. The quality of display in nearly all laboratories does little to support the quality of learning, help set standards or celebrate the quality of work of pupils and students. The teachers are well qualified and there have been few changes of teachers. Teachers are appropriately deployed, although staffing in physics is tight. Technical support is effective and does much to ensure the extremely smooth running of lessons. The systems for tracking the pupils' progress are better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Insufficient use is made of assessment data to pinpoint underachieving pupils and modify teaching to help them improve.

98. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection. Standards have risen at the age of fourteen and the weaknesses in the teaching of A-level chemistry have been fully addressed. There are better quality teaching materials for the full range of ability. However, there has been insufficient progress on two of the most important key points for action set out in the last inspection report. ICT is still not well used in lessons; the monitoring of teaching and marking, although begun, still needs to be more rigorous. The main challenges for the department are to continue to focus on improving standards by raising the quality and consistency of teaching, updating the curriculum and upgrading the quality of the learning environment.

ART AND DESIGN

99. At the end of Key Stage 3, a higher than average percentage of both boys and girls reached the expected standard or above in the Teacher Assessments in 2000. Boys do less well than girls, and this gap is wider than the national difference. At the end of Key Stage 4, the number of pupils gaining a grade in the A*-C range in the GCSE examinations in 2000 is well above the national average. Boys do less well than girls, but by a smaller margin than that nationally. At A-level, the percentage of pupils gaining a grade in the A-C range in 2000 is significantly above the national average. Results have varied over the last four years; this is largely due to the changes made to the range and type of examinations entered and the number of students taking the courses.
100. This inspection confirms the above average standards at the end of Key Stage 3. The pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average and they quickly achieve useful skills in drawing and recording their observations and ideas. Research skills are good and by the end of year 9, pupils are able to make good use of their understanding of the work of a wide range of artists in developing images and artefacts of their own. In a Year 9 group, the pupils' sketchbooks were lively and full of interesting research. The best pupils used their initiative to produce imaginative pictures based on the work of abstract artists; as a result, they reach high standards. The inspection also confirms the well above average standards reached in the GCSE examinations, with very good achievement in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils have a sophisticated approach, in both fine art and graphics. The depth of research and the ability to appraise and develop their own work are very good, although they are better in fine art than in graphics. The graphics course attracts a much higher proportion of boys, some of whom are less inclined to work hard than the girls are. In a Year 11 group, the pupils' work books were up to 30 centimetres thick, illustrating cultural influences from Egyptian, and Japanese art as well as the architecture of Gaudi and elements of the mass-media; the quality of much of this work shows high achievement across a wide range of topics. Overall, results have improved significantly over the last 4 years. The inspection confirms the high standards at the end of the sixth form. Students taking the fine art option achieve a higher standard than those taking the graphics or photography courses. This is largely because some very high attaining students take fine art, whereas those with lower grades at GCSE, including a higher proportion of boys, take graphics or photography.
101. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. The key strengths in the teaching are the consistently high expectations and the level of challenge given to the pupils. This peaks in the GCSE classes where teachers coax exciting work from even the most reluctant learners. In a Year 10 graphics lesson, which was mostly boys, the teacher gave very clear instructions, based on excellent planning, that ensured pupils were in no doubt about what they had to do. Individual attention, based on a solid understanding of the pupils' needs and very good knowledge of the subject, inspired the pupils to work imaginatively on images generated by a visit to the Tate Modern. Many of the best pupils go on to become A-level students in the sixth form, where teachers help bring their creativity and individuality to the fore in rich paintings, reliefs and amazing costume 'sculptures'. The teachers' enjoyment of the subject is transferred to the pupils and students at all levels, resulting in very good attitudes. Because of this, the pupils will use their initiative to develop their work and many do far more homework than is expected of them. They know how well they are doing because work is marked regularly with helpful comments and targets. This thorough approach is evident in the teachers' careful planning, as in a Year 7 lesson

where the teacher had provided very good still life objects to help observe and record a range of tones. The teachers take care to help pupils with special educational needs, who also do well.

102. Art is a strength of the school and this is very much due to the very good leadership and management. The head of department is inspirational, setting the tone for much of the style of the art work and the high standards of teaching and learning. With the help of the senior managers, she has monitored teaching and provided support and guidance for less successful teachers. Standards of attainment, including examination results have been studied and changes made to the curriculum and timetable in order to raise standards and provide an appropriate curriculum for all pupils. The under-achievement of boys has been tackled, although this is at an early stage and has yet to have much impact on standards. A very rich range of field trips and visits enhances the opportunities provided, but the department does struggle with unsatisfactory accommodation at the main school site. There is insufficient storage space for work and materials and the rooms are badly in need of refurbishment. This means that pupils have to store work at home so that the subject has enough room to work in. Classrooms that have recently become for the subject are too small, and have not been adapted for art use. There are holes in the floor in one room which present a hazard. The pupils' learning also suffers from the split site with some classes starting late. On the other hand, teachers could make better use of the storage space to alleviate some of the problems caused by different teachers having to share the same room. In addition, the enthusiasm for large 3-dimensional work, even in photography, does not make things easier.
103. Art continues to be very popular with all pupils. The subject has made good improvements since the last inspection, despite problems with accommodation which limits the range of areas taught. The subject, for example, is unable, at present, to branch out into printmaking and ceramics. Clear strategies for progression in skills teaching have been introduced. ICT plays an important part and is used very creatively. To help the subject to move forward even further, the accommodation needs to be improved, and teachers need to continue to improve the boys' achievement and to consider a more flexible approach to the use of materials and processes.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. In recent years, including 2000, the overall GCSE results in design & technology have been well above the national average. Results in textiles, food, and graphical communications have been significantly above the national average. Girls outperform boys and achieve significantly above the national average for girls in all design areas. Boys achieve slightly above the national average overall for boys although results are well below the average in resistant materials and graphics in 2000. The overall proportion of pupils achieving a grade in the range A*-G is slightly above the average. A-level results in textiles were significantly above the national average last year and well below the average in graphics products. Pupils attain as well in design and technology as they do in other subjects.
105. Standards of work of the current Year 9, at the end of Key Stage 3, are above average; as their attainments on entry are broadly average, this represents good achievement for these pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The higher attainers, mostly girls, achieve very well and reach well above average standards by Year 9. Most pupils have a good understanding of the design process and principles. Graphical communication skills are good overall. Girls tend to take greater care and take more pride in their work than boys and are more conscientious in their research and design work. Literacy skills are weak in the work of the average and lower attaining students who are unsure of the correct terminology when explaining and describing their ideas. In practical lessons in resistant materials, the pupils are developing good skills in using tools and equipment, for example, in the production of the 'door stop'. Similarly, Year 8 pupils reveal much flair and imagination in their 'tie projects'. However, the pupils' knowledge and understanding and their skills in the use of computer-aided design and manufacture are weak.

106. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work are well above average overall. In most design & technology subjects, pupils make very good progress and are achieving very well in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the GCSE courses. Standards, achievement and progress are adversely affected in Year 10 food technology, where non-specialist teachers have an insecure knowledge and understanding of the subject they teach. Likewise, achievement and progress are affected when textiles is taught in non-specialist rooms, where specialist equipment and materials are not available. Pupils achieve well in graphics products where the work in their design folios is significantly above average. Finished products show high levels of creativity, especially the work of the higher attainers. The design process is well understood and firmly embedded in all projects. Graphical communication skills are very good, especially so in the work of the higher attaining girls. Literacy skills are better than in Year 9 although weaknesses remain in the work of average and lower attaining students, and many do not use the correct subject terminology. In Year 11 systems and control students show very good problem solving skills and a very good knowledge and understanding in the use of the computer to control their electronic projects. However, more use could be made of computers in GCSE coursework, especially at the design stage and in some aspects of manufacture. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress, especially when teachers can call upon technical support staff. However, although a technician provides invaluable help for the pupils' learning, the overall amount of technical support time is insufficient to meet the needs of all the pupils who would benefit from it.
107. In the sixth form, standards are well above the expectation in textiles. Standards are above average in the combined graphics and resistant materials A-level course. In textiles, students reveal very good skills in using 'computerised pattern drafting software' to produce intricate garment patterns. Also in textiles, product outcomes are executed to a very high standard with much flair and imagination evident in the designs created. In graphics and resistant materials, students show good problem solving skills and innovative solutions to design tasks, which include a wide range of materials including electronic components. Overall research, design and graphical communication skills are good. Students in the sixth form are achieving well in relation to their results at GCSE.
108. The teaching is good. All specialist design and technology teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan effectively, and set challenging and interesting design tasks, which are well matched to the pupils' interests and ability. The objectives for each lesson are effectively shared with the pupils so that they are clearly aware of what they need to complete in the time available. Expectations are high with pupils expected to produce their best efforts in each lesson. The teaching is successful in ensuring that pupils and students improve and develop their design and realisation skills consistently throughout the college. However, whilst teachers provide pupils with clear guidelines for their design tasks, some worksheets are not adapted to cater for the full range of attainment in the class making it more difficult for those with weak reading skills to readily understand what is required. The department's strategy for developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is not consistently implemented, leading to an inconsistent approach to the application of these skills. The good teaching ensures that pupils are motivated and that they know what is expected of them in their design projects. As a result, they learn well in the great majority of lessons. The great majority of pupils responds well to the teaching and behave very well in lessons. Because of these good attitudes, they achieve well and make good progress in their learning. The assessment system is used effectively to support the pupils' progress towards their targets by ensuring they know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to improve to achieve the projected targets. However, pupils are not always sure of the standards they have reached in Years 7 to 9 and are unsure about what they need to do to improve. Homework is regularly set and recorded in the pupils' planners. It effectively extends the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject by requiring them to research topics in greater depth than would be possible in the timetabled lessons.

109. The new head of department for design & technology provides good leadership and a very clear educational direction for the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning is being developed effectively through lesson observations, so that teachers are able to identify and share good practice. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with standards rising steadily.

GEOGRAPHY

110. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 is well above the national average with boys and girls achieving similarly high results that are well above their respective national average. Pupils achieve higher results in geography than they do in the other subjects they study, and are an improvement on the 1999 results. The GCE A-level results in 2000 are above the national average and an improvement on those achieved in the 1999. Both boys' and girls' results are above their respective national average with those of boys significantly improving on the previous year's results.
111. In work seen during the inspection, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are reaching average standards. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 attain lower than expected standards due to the below average time allocation and a lack of continuity in learning, but standards improve appreciably in Year 9 when pupils make rapid progress and attain satisfactory standards. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards and students in Years 12 and 13 also attain standards above the national average. This represents a good level of achievement based on prior attainments at the start of the courses.
112. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils successfully acquire map and graphical skills, and sound geographical knowledge. Many pupils, particularly the higher attainers, have good research skills and use computers to develop and improve the quality of projects. Extended pieces of writing are improved through re-drafting particularly in Year 9, but in Years 7 and 8 there is little developed writing, and, for lower attaining pupils, weaknesses in grammatical accuracy reduce the level of achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when they receive additional support from classroom assistants, as this contributes to improving their understanding and helps to ensure that writing tasks are completed.
113. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils continue to consolidate geographical skills and acquire knowledge of a range of topics, including, for example, weather patterns and processes in the UK and understanding about world issues such as the effects of human actions on the environment. Fieldwork is mostly of a high standard, with gifted and talented pupils writing good, analytical accounts. Most make good use of numeracy skills in analysing data and in representing information through graphs and charts; this leads to most pupils achieving above average standards. The quality of the work is improved through the use of computers. For the minority of otherwise average pupils, however, the quality of their written and illustrative work is below average because they leave work incomplete, and pay insufficient attention to the labelling of diagrams and graphs. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because suitable material are provided to support their writing tasks, and they respond well to encouragement given in marking.
114. Students in Years 12 and 13 have good skills in reading and interpreting information. In the topics studied, they know a wide range of technical terms, understand the physical processes that shape the landscape and have an appreciation of the implications of changes in the rural economy of Britain. Most students show good numerical competence when interpreting hydrographs in studies of river basins. In oral presentations however, a minority of students in Year 12, boys more so than girls, do not develop issues in sufficient depth, whilst in Year 13 a minority of students do not confidently recall earlier learning to progress their understanding about global warming. Overall, the students' achievements are good, building on their high attainment at Key Stage 4.

115. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with regular reinforcement of learning from previous lessons. Teachers have strategies to meet the learning needs of pupils of different attainment and these are successful. Extension work, with more challenging tasks, are planned for higher attaining pupils in most lessons, enabling many pupils to reach to their full potential. Pupils with special educational needs are often assisted through specific learning materials and additional adult support, and this support enables them to learn at similar rates to other pupils. Day-to-day assessment of work, particularly the end of unit assessment, informs pupils about how well they are achieving and how to improve. This gives encouragement and helps pupils to make sound progress. Teachers make good use of a range of learning resources. Year 9 pupils, for example, made good progress in a lesson when computers were used to research the effects and solutions of recent earthquakes in India and El Salvador in order to produce newspaper simulations. High attaining pupils made very good progress through the opportunities given to show independent learning skills. Occasionally, learning is unsatisfactory due to the pupils' poor attitudes and weaknesses in lesson planning; as a result, concentration drops and learning slows down. Teachers regular mark pupils work and give praise for effort but the correction and expectation of achievement is inconsistent across the year groups. This results in pupils giving insufficient attention to improving grammatical skills and not knowing how to improve their work.
116. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils in Key Stage 4 is good. The teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding have a very positive impact on the pupils' learning because they are able to explain things clearly and convey their enthusiasm for the subject to pupils. Pupils made excellent progress in a Year 11 lesson on international trade as a result of the teacher's expertise in the use of resources and a lesson structure that consistently set challenges for pupils to think and develop ideas about world trade issues. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress as a result of a specially designed work sheet and teacher support. Teachers are particularly successful in the guidance and training of pupils in GCSE coursework, enabling them to know the standards expected; this leads to the achievement of high standards. Occasionally learning is insufficiently effective when pupils are not well motivated, their concentration weakens and insufficient progress is made.
117. The quality of teaching and learning of students in Years 12 and 13 is very good. Teachers have very good subject expertise and sound understanding of the course requirements. The teachers' explanations are clear and guided discussion helps ensure that complex issues are understood. Lessons are characterised by depth of study and academic rigour, and this ensures that the high expectations that the teachers have of students, particularly the higher attainers, are fully realised. Year 13 students for example, made very good progress in developing their understanding of the reasons for changes in water storage levels in contrasting places. Learning at times however is less effective when opportunities are not taken to promote learning through inter-student discussion; as a result, students do not develop their understanding through sharing ideas about the topics studied.
118. The curriculum is broad and balanced and enhanced through a comprehensive programme of fieldwork study. The provision for promoting pupils' moral and cultural development is good but spiritual development is unsatisfactory because there are insufficient planned opportunities for reflection about the forces that create and shape the earth and the environment. The planning of cross-curricular issues such as spiritual and cultural aspects, however, is not identified in planning and their contribution to learning is not evaluated. Assessment practice is good with moderation of National Curriculum levels that informs well on the pupils' learning. This enables pupils to have good ideas of what they need to do to improve. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The schemes of work are well written except for insufficient guidance on different levels of resources available and recommended for particular topics. The deployment of teachers is mostly good except in Years 7 and 8 where the full time specialists do not make a contribution.

119. Since the last inspection GCSE results have improved to well above the national average and the boys' achievement is now equal to that of girls. The quality of teaching has improved at A-level to very good; book resources have improved for pupils at Key Stage 4 and A-level, and these are now sufficient for needs. Access to computers continues to reduce opportunities for some pupils to use data bases and develop graphical skills. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HISTORY

120. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above the nationally expected level for the last two years. GCSE results at grades A* to C have improved during the last three years, and, in 2000, they are well above the national average for all schools. The pupils' overall results in history in 2000 are better than those they obtained in their other subjects. A-level results at grades A and B have fluctuated in recent years; in 1998 they were well above the national average but were below in 1999 and improved in 2000. Results at grades A to E have either been in line with the national average or above. Overall, results at A-level have reflected the prior attainment of students and they have usually achieved at least their predicted grades.
121. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are above the nationally expected level for 14 year-olds; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average, whilst those at A-level are average. At all levels pupils achieve well and make good progress, except occasionally in Year 9 when a few boys underachieve; pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress as other pupils. At Key Stage 3, most pupils have a good understanding of the major events and changes in the periods they have been studying, for example social change in Britain in the period 1750 to 1900. They work well with historical sources of information, as in a lesson when pupils were able to use a wide range of sources to find out about the Holocaust. At Key Stage 4, most pupils master the content of the GCSE course successfully; they have a good understanding of issues and topics, such as the role of women in Nazi Germany. They produce well-argued analytical writing, although a few pupils have difficulty in providing sufficient detail to support their judgements and conclusions. At A-level, students have a sound and often, good grasp of the A-level topics, and can analyse relevant issues and questions, as in a Year 13 lesson on why Fascism had become popular in Italy by the end of 1921. The written work of the best students is clear, effective and well substantiated, but a few students have difficulty in bringing sufficient detail and depth to their work.
122. The quality of teaching and learning at all levels is consistently good, with very good teaching and learning in some lessons. The teachers' very good subject knowledge, combined with a clear appreciation of teaching requirements, is well used to extend the pupils' historical thinking and skills. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the history of medicine, very good teacher guidance, on how to write succinct and well-structured answers to a question on the importance of Lister's work, enabled pupils to improve their writing skills. Thorough planning and effective day-to-day assessment mean that work is well matched to the learning needs of individual pupils, which enables them to make good progress in lessons. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods, which engage the pupils' interests very effectively and help them understand new topics; for example, an ambitious role play in Year 8 enabled pupils to understand some of the issues and personalities at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in England. Teachers usually have high expectations of what pupils can achieve; this encourages them to work at a good pace although occasionally insufficient demands are made on a few pupils, which leads to under-achievement. Because of the good teaching and interesting lessons, behaviour in lessons is good, attitudes to the subject are positive and history is popular in the school.

123. The department is well led and managed, enabling the teachers to work very closely together to share ideas and resources; this makes a significant contribution to the high quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Teachers are well-qualified and experienced. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection, and all the issues raised in the last report have been addressed. Good progress has been made in developing assessment procedures and the information obtained is well used for planning the pupils' work and monitoring their progress. Accommodation has improved significantly, because all history lessons are now taught on the Green Lane site, usually in designated history rooms with very good classroom displays. Sound progress has been made in the use of ICT for history, but further development is necessary, especially for analysing historical data and using the internet for research purposes. Whilst there has been some monitoring of teaching, this has not yet been sufficiently systematic to ensure that all tasks are consistently challenging enough for all pupils. The department is well placed to address these issues, as well as continuing to focus on raising standards still further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that above three-quarters of the pupils achieved the expected level 5 or above in 2000, significantly above the national average. Such high standards were not borne out by the inspection evidence, although a minority of pupils do attain very high standards during this key stage. GCSE information technology results have improved during the last three years, but they have remained below national average levels. In 2000, 48 per cent of those who were entered gained grades in the range A* to C and this compares with a national average of 55 per cent. Pupils tend to do less well in GCSE information technology than in most other subjects that they take. In some years, only a few students are entered for GCE A-level in computing. Results in recent years have been variable. Although results were average in 1998 they have been much below average over the last two years with nearly half of the total candidates failing to obtain pass grades. Significantly more boys than girls are entered for the GCSE and GCE A level examinations. In 2000 all ten entries for the A-level were boys.
125. The majority of pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment in ICT. However, at the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen during the inspection are at the average level for 14 year-olds; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are below the national average. The achievements of the majority of pupils are, therefore, unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Standards of work seen in classes vary widely from pupil to pupil. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3 where a minority of pupils are confident users of computers and can make good progress with the practical tasks set largely on an independent basis. However many pupils are far less confident and require significant help from either a technician or the teacher to allow them to make progress. A Year 8 class, for example, after an initial introduction, were required to use control software to draw different specified shapes using the computers that were available. Whilst a number of pupils could undertake the task confidently, many others required significant teacher support in order to satisfactorily complete the task. During Key Stages 3 and 4, the majority of pupils develop increasing confidence in using and applying software relating to handling and communicating information. However, their knowledge and skills relating to measurement and control aspects of the National Curriculum requirements are far less well developed.
126. Pupils and students make increasing and appropriate use of ICT across a range of subjects. In particular subjects such as art, business studies, English, geography, mathematics and music, good use is now made. Sensible and appropriate use of ICT is also made in many aspects of the sixth form provision. However, the full integration of ICT has yet to be achieved in many subjects. In several subjects, significant use is made of computer based learning materials, CD-ROMs and the internet. One Year 7 class, for example, made good use of computer based learning materials to consolidate their mathematical skills. A Year 9 science class used a CD-ROM to investigate the splitting of white light into a spectrum. Pupils involved in both cases showed high levels of motivation when using the software. In both classes, the computer was being used effectively to enhance the quality of experience of the pupils. Opportunities for making appropriate use of ICT are however missed in a range of other subjects. For example, in science, physical education,

design & technology and history, only limited use is made of appropriate ICT. The main factor that impedes the greater use of ICT is a lack of access to appropriate computer resources, though, in some subjects, there is a lack of expertise amongst the teachers. Many pupils and students make significant use of computers that are available at home to support aspects of their work.

127. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at each of the key stages and in the sixth form. Although there is no unsatisfactory teaching, little is good and none is very good. In some classes, pupils are insufficiently challenged and their progress and achievements with tasks are not closely monitored. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. Many involve pupils working on an individual basis at computers on assigned tasks, enabling them to learn at their own pace. Good support is normally provided by either the teacher or a member of technical staff when pupils require it; as a result pupils are able to make satisfactory progress. In several classes good use is made of prepared overhead projector transparencies and detailed handouts; these help pupils achieve a basic understanding of the topics being covered. Also, in a number of classes, good use is made of computer based learning materials that have been developed by the teachers. These help the pupils in understanding aspects of the topics being covered. Although, for most classes, the management of pupils is effective and standards of discipline are appropriate, in a few classes, pupils are allowed to go off task and distract other pupils from their work. In a Year 13 class, for example, students were undertaking work relating to digitised sound representation as part of their A-level course. At times the nature and pace of activities undertaken by the class led to the majority of students being insufficiently challenged. As a result of this, they failed to make further progress with the task. Although most teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and its requirements, several teachers are not fully conversant with aspects of the software that is used. Learning is adversely affected in a number of classes because pupils and students arrive late, and some are not challenged by the teachers about their late arrival. A number of classes do not start promptly. Overall, however, the majority of pupils has a positive attitude to their work in ICT. Behaviour, with a few minor exceptions, is good. Many pupils are particularly well motivated when undertaking practical work using the computer. Several pupils working towards their GCSE had not made good use of their time. Although the deadline for completion of the major project for the course was imminent, many were unlikely to fully complete the work in the time remaining because teachers, in these cases, are not monitoring the pupils' progress closely enough as deadlines approach.
128. Leadership and management of ICT in the college is unsatisfactory. The provision in Key Stage 3 and 4 does not lead to the progressive development of the pupils' skills. The arrangements at Key Stage 3 do not ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements are met particularly in respect of measurement and control. The current unsatisfactory timetabling arrangements at Key Stage 3 mean that pupils have ICT lessons when other teachers are absent. Individual pupils' progress is not closely monitored, and classes frequently have a number of different teachers. The teacher assessments towards the end of Key Stage 3 are unreliable. Monitoring and evaluation procedures now involve an annual review of examination results and the setting of future targets. However they do not yet include the observation of teaching and learning. Good practice cannot, therefore, be spread, and poorer practice eliminated. As a result, it is not possible to accurately identify what aspects of teaching are particularly successful, and what are less successful. An increasing proportion of teachers now have the necessary skills and confidence to make appropriate use of ICT to support teaching and learning across an increasing range of subjects. There is a good level of technical support for the computer resources, so that high quality hardware and software are available to users. The overall ratio of pupils to modern computers in the college is approaching 10:1. This ratio is less favourable than found in other similar schools and leads to difficulties in access, particularly at the Green Lane site of the college. Good links have been developed with a range of primary schools, so several teachers have a detailed knowledge of the ICT experiences that pupils have had when they join the college.

129. Although there have been some improvements since the last inspection, a number of significant weaknesses remain. Some unsatisfactory teaching and learning existed at the time of the last inspection. All is now at least satisfactory. Although there is now an increased number of lessons for teaching ICT skills, aspects of the current provision are unsatisfactory and, overall, do not lead to the progressive development of the pupils' skills. GCSE and A-level results are poorer than at the time of the last inspection and standards of achievement continue to be unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Despite continuing weaknesses, the college is making increased use of appropriate ICT across a range of subjects. Although computer resources available for the pupils' use have improved significantly since the last inspection, they continue to be below the national average levels.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

130. The teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 show standards well below national averages. However, as these assessments include pupils who have studied their second foreign language for only one year, no reliable conclusions can be drawn from the results. In the 2000 GCSE examination in French, the percentage of pupils with higher grades A*-C was well above national averages for both boys and girls. Results show a marked improvement over 1999 figures in a continuing upward trend over recent years, which is better than the national trend. However, both boys and girls did less well in French than in their other examination subjects. In the German GCSE examination, the percentage of pupils with grades A*-C was generally in line with national averages. Boys perform better than nationally, continuing an upward trend over the last four years. There is no clear trend in the girls' results over the same period, but they remain below the national averages. German results in 2000 for both boys and girls are broadly in line with their other GCSE subjects. In Spanish results are broadly in line with the national average. Over the past four years they have shown a rising trend in line with the national trend. However, pupils do less well in Spanish than in most other subjects they study. French was the only language offered at GCE A Level in 2000. All five students entered were awarded an A grade, a notable achievement. Students have been entered for A-level in both German and Spanish in previous years, though numbers have too small for valid national comparisons to be made.
131. At the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, standards of work seen in French during the inspection are at national average levels; at A-level, they are above average. Achievement across Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory, but staffing difficulties have caused disruptions to the teaching of some classes, and this has meant that some pupils recently have not been achieving as well as they should have been. In German and Spanish, the pupils' achievements are good in their first year of studying a second modern foreign language in Year 9. The standard they reach is above what would be expected after one year. Pupils continue to achieve well at Key Stage 4, so that, by the end of Key Stage 4, they are attaining average standards, even though they have studied their second modern foreign language for only three years. Achievement at A-level is good.
132. At Key Stage 3, overall, in all languages, there are no marked differences between boys and girls; however, the teachers' expectations of higher attainers in French are not always high enough to consistently challenge them to reach the highest levels. In Spanish lower and average attaining pupils reach levels at the end of Year 9 which are broadly typical for beginners at this stage. Higher attaining pupils do well, responding with interest to the more challenging teaching they receive, so that their standards compare well with those of first language learners; this represents good achievement. In German, all pupils achieve well, accelerating to a standard above expectations from a single year's study. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in their studies of a foreign language, because teachers adapt work for them and they receive good support from learning support assistants. In all three languages, listening skills are developing well because teachers use the foreign language intensively in the classroom. As a result, pupils respond instinctively to classroom instructions to take out exercise books, to turn to a certain page or to move into pairs for work. Writing reaches national expectations by the end of the key stage and pupils can write several lines to describe their town and write short letters to a

pen-friend. Pupils are less confident in speaking. Although classrooms have good displays to encourage pupils to use the foreign language in normal situations, such as asking for paper or explaining that they have forgotten their homework, the use of these phrases is not common practice. When learning new work, pupils often get worksheets or see the written word before they have done enough speaking activities to drill these words and their correct pronunciation into their memory. This is partly because the new timetable allows less time for foreign languages and teachers are concerned to cover the extensive content in their schemes of work.

133. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards peak at the national average, with only limited examples of the more original and spontaneous use of language associated with the highest grades. In German, one pupil has produced an attractive tourist brochure listing the attractions of Crowborough, but, generally, there are very few examples of extended writing or of original work by pupils. Problems of staffing during the current year have led to some inconsistency of teaching and affected standards. Even so, standards are average overall because other teachers have shared groups to ensure some good teaching. Standards in the sixth form are at expected levels and, in Year 12, above average. In Year 12, in all three languages, students are confident, competent and eager to use the foreign language. With group sizes larger than in previous years, there is a lively dynamic atmosphere for learning; there is marked progress and good achievement. Students in Year 13 are more reticent orally, but are encouraged by the supportive good relationships with their teachers. Written work overall is satisfactory and reflects how well teachers have consolidated aspects of grammar. Authentic materials are used to stimulate the students' interest and to encourage them to express opinions on issues such as the media.
134. The quality of teaching to all year groups in all three languages is judged satisfactory overall; it is at least sound in all lessons and often good. Teaching in the sixth form is universally good. In Spanish teaching is sound at Key Stage 4 and good at Key Stage 3. In both French and German teaching is sound at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.
135. All teachers have good personal language skills and teach in the foreign language. The number of native speakers in the department is a bonus. As a result, pupils and students are used to the speed and intonation of the foreign language and have good listening skills. In a Year 11 French group, pupils listened to recorded reports of a number of traffic accidents and were able not only to pick out key information but also a number of details. Teachers use paired work to involve all pupils in speaking practice. In one group of lower attaining pupils in a German lesson, mutual questioning about part-time jobs reinforced the new words so that by the end of the lesson most of them could recall the vocabulary with quite accurate pronunciation. In a Year 8 Spanish class, flash cards were well used to introduce and reinforce the learning of new words about a café before the pupils saw the words written. Foreign language assistants are well used to work with small groups of pupils to improve their speaking skills. Generally, however, there is not enough opportunity or challenge to pupils to speak the foreign language. As a result speaking skills are not well developed and pupils become dependent on the written word or teacher prompting before answering questions. The teachers' preparation of examination groups at both GCSE and A Level is good and shows the clear benefit of the teachers' experience. At A-Level, where teachers focus on reinforcing key grammar and encouraging active oral work, students in Year 12 already speak with good accents and some fluency and can write their own opinions on a number of topics. The positive attitudes of sixth form students to their work and their maturity are major contributory factors to the good learning observed. Teachers assess the pupils' work in Key Stage 3 by national curriculum levels and communicate these to parents on reports. Although one teacher encourages the pupils' self-assessment, there is no consistent use of levels when marking books to inform pupils of their progress, or to set targets for improvement. Recent teacher assessments for Year 9 and examination predictions for Year 10 appear to be out of line with assessments in other subjects, with the department's own targets and with standards observed during the inspection. The reports on students in the sixth form are both informative and constructive in their comments about ways to improve. Work in books is marked but there is inconsistency of practice. Marking offers encouragement and helpful corrections, but there is little evidence of a policy for pupils to correct work and insufficient demand for neat presentation. As a result pupils often repeat the same basic mistakes. Teachers keep good records, including for attendance at lessons. Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject, work effectively in

pair work and benefit from good relationships amongst themselves and with teachers; as a result, learning is at least satisfactory, and, in some areas, good. Boys contribute as actively to lessons as the girls.

136. This is a potentially strong department with experience and very good subject skills. The commitment of the teachers is evident in the resources they have developed, in the redrafting of schemes of work, and in the range of trips and exchanges they organise. Some students in Year 12 are very positive about the benefits of a month's exchange visit to France. The department regularly reviews its work and has identified a number of issues for development, such as marking and improving written work. However, leadership has been unsatisfactory in addressing these issues in a systematic way to create consistent practice across the department.
137. Overall standards in examinations have improved in all three subjects since the last inspection. The study of a second language now begins in Year 8 and there is a marked increase in the number of students studying languages in the sixth form. There has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection, particularly in addressing the issues of sharing good teaching and marking practice. There is still much good practice, but the issue of inconsistency has not been addressed. There is no departmental system for monitoring aspects of teaching and no structured approach to development. As a result, initiatives such as the displays to encourage classroom language or to inform pupils about national curriculum levels are introduced, but not reviewed or followed up. To raise standards the modern foreign languages department needs to develop structured approaches for monitoring and evaluating aspects of the department's work. The department needs to seek ways to give greater emphasis in their teaching to improving the pupils' speaking skills. They need to ensure that their assessments are consistent across the department and to make greater use of the data on pupils to identify under-achievement and to set targets. The department has the capacity and commitment to deal with these issues.

MUSIC

138. By the end of Key Stage 3, the teachers' own assessments show overall standards of attainment are well above average; inspection evidence matches this. GCSE examination results in 2000 are above average with 83 per cent of candidates gaining A*-C grades; these results are an improvement on the previous year. Pupils taking music also attain highly in their other subjects and actually did less well, overall, in music compared with the other subjects they took. Over the period 1996 to 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* - C was above the national average, apart from 1997 and 1999 when results dipped. In 2000 the subject had its first entry at A-level, with two candidates gaining grade C passes.
139. In work seen, standards in music overall are well above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and the sixth form, and are an improvement from the time of the last inspection. Most pupils enter the college with average musical skills and, overall, they make very good progress over time. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils' attainments are well above average and this represents very good achievement across all groups. They enjoy music and have good rapport with their teachers. At Key Stage 3, most pupils make very good progress in knowledge, skills and understanding, and put creative effort into their work. Year 7 pupils recognise major, minor and chromatic scales and answer well-chosen questions to demonstrate and reinforce their learning. They accurately clap rhythms from the board in preparation for keyboard work. Challenging teaching inspires and motivates pupils, such as one Year 8 lesson where the pupils' understanding of the blues scale was reinforced by a class performance on xylophones that included some improvised parts. Much independent learning goes on in Year 9, where pupils take turns to direct their peers in their own compositions, using the vast array of gamelan instruments based in the college. For those pupils taking music at Key Stage 4, standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Throughout Key Stage 4, very good learning takes place and pupils perform their own compositions with style and attention to detail. All pupils in Year 11 have reached a very high standard of performance through active participating in college musical activities and by being members of bands and orchestras run by the county music service. Many have also taken associated board examinations. Progress has been so good this year that all are on target to get A*-C grades at GCSE. Most pupils are proficient at

using the well-equipped recording studio and a few pupils have produced audio compact discs of their performances. Students in Year 13 improve their knowledge of post 1945 music by taking notes on the music of Stockhausen as preparation for their own independent research. They listen to his musical piece *Zyklus* to get a flavour of this modern musical style. They, too, are achieving very well and attaining high standards.

140. Pupils work well together and their attitudes to music are very positive, creating the right conditions for their learning. When pupils perform to the class, other pupils listen well and nearly always behave very well; as a result, they learn from each other's work by picking up ideas and techniques. They work well in pairs on keyboards and sensibly discuss ways of tackling their work. Movement around the room is purposeful, with instruments and equipment handled carefully; pupils are trusted to work productively in the practice rooms; as a result, their independent learning skills are very good. Older pupils have good dialogue with teachers and talk intelligently about their work. In work observed there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
141. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, mainly due to the teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations, which lead to sustained learning amongst pupils. At Key Stage 3, teaching and learning are good. At Key Stage 4, they are very good, and excellent teaching leads to very good learning at A-level. All music teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables pupils to get a wide breadth of study across the musical skills of performing, composing, appraisal and listening. Much thought has gone into the preparation of the scheme of work to give pupils a stimulating musical experience that leads to large numbers opting for examination courses in music. In lessons, the teachers enrich the pupils' musical learning with background detail such as the short insight into the slave trade during a lesson on the blues scale. Year 9 pupils react to the teachers' high expectations by taking the initiative to organise and direct performances on steel pans and gamelan instruments, and appraise their work by using musical language. This active approach helps their learning, which proceeds rapidly. Through good classroom management and careful planning of lessons by the teachers, pupils behave well and take their learning forward. Sometimes, however, there is not always sufficient time left at the end of lessons for a summing up to reinforce the learning that has taken place. Teaching in Key Stage 4 effectively prepares pupils for examinations in music, with coursework carefully monitored, and appraisal done by pupils and the teacher together. As a result, pupils know their strengths and weaknesses, and are able focus their learning where it is most needed. Students in Year 13 are taught to take responsibility for their work and they independently organise musical events both in college and the local community; these experiences successfully promote their musical skills and learning.
142. Since the last inspection standards have risen and this has coincided with the appointment of a new head of department and the introduction of ICT into the work of the subject. Because both boys and girls of all abilities are equally familiar with the computer programmes, they can use them to work independently and to develop their skills; for example, most pupils in Year 9 can edit and record their work. Older pupils use multi-tracking and sequencing to develop advanced compositions. ICT is only available in the music department at the Beeches site, and so this important aid to the achievements in music does not have an impact until Year 9.
143. The music department is well led and managed. The scheme of work addresses all statutory requirements and very careful records and tape recordings of work are kept in accessible files. Work is marked regularly but teacher comments do not always give a focus for the future. The assessment system is clear and understood by most pupils, but now needs to incorporate the new levels for music introduced in September 2000. The quality of accommodation and the facilities have a very positive impact by encouraging participation by large numbers of pupils in an attractive environment. Many musical activities take place at lunchtime and after school, and one accomplished Year 13 student was observed giving a violin recital in aid of charity. The jazz band and steel pans band are a popular feature of college life; they give regular concerts in college and the local community. More than 150 pupils learn to play instruments and many support extra-curricular activities, including those run by the county music service. Overall, music

is an important and vibrant part of the life of the college, with very good improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. The 2000 teacher assessments of the pupils' attainments show standards are broadly in line with national averages, though evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards pupils attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected for students of the same age nationally. The 2000 GCSE results are above average; evidence from the inspection also shows that standards that present pupils are attaining at the end of Key stage 4 are also above the national average. The pupils' GCSE results in physical education compare favourably with the results they achieve in other subjects. A small group of students in 2000 took GCE A-level. The proportion of them achieving A to B grades is broadly in line with the national average, with all students obtaining passes. However, the small size of the group means that no meaningful statistical comparisons can be made against national averages. Both GCSE and A-level examination show steady improvement over the last three years. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In 2000 no pupils took examinations in dance. Small groups of pupils in Key Stage 4 successfully follow a certificated junior sports leaders course.
145. The above average standards reached in Key Stage 3 represent good achievement by most pupils compared with their standards on entry. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in gymnastics, trampolining, dance and a range of games. In games, pupils apply the rules fairly and accept decisions gracefully. They understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur when they warm up; they understand the reason for stretching is to minimise injury and maximise performance. Many pupils begin to know the anatomical names of the different muscles. Year 9 pupils know the correct grip to use when playing badminton; they adopt the correct stance when receiving a deep badminton service and successful deep high serves. Higher attaining pupils use good footwork and move quickly on court in order to take up the best tactical position. Poor footwork by lower attaining pupils results in less tactical success. Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of quality gymnastic movements; they work very effectively in pairs and small groups producing balance and counter balance movements. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, are fully integrated into lessons; they all make good progress.
146. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 are above the level expected of the same age nationally. The good progress and achievements seen in Key Stage 3 continue. These standards are enhanced through their involvement in extra curricular clubs, college teams and representative honours. Skills and games concepts are well developed. For example, in Year 11 football game, pupils started to use width and depth in attack, and, in another lesson, pupils made effective use of their hands in order to gain height when trampolining. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers and make good progress. Pupils studying GCSE show a basic knowledge of muscles, joints and the cardio vascular system using the correct anatomical words. They use simple tests in order to compare themselves with national scores in muscle endurance, coordination and reaction times. Throughout Key Stage 4, pupils produce high quality dance routines. The skills developed in Key Stage 3 are put under pressure and are applied successfully to a range of game situations, ensuring that good progress continues in Key Stage 4.

147. Students in Years 12 and 13 choose to participate in physical recreation during curriculum time; they show a good standard in a range of individual and team games. A small group of Year 12 and 13 students make good progress in their examination courses and are achieving well; their standards are above average. Students successfully study personality traits comparing extravert and introvert behaviour and their effects in sport. They devise good fitness schedules using knowledge of an athlete's age and medical condition.
148. The quality of teaching is good at all key stages and in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection; however, there are instances where teaching has some shortcomings. For the last three years the college has been granted Sports College status; this funding allows for significant enhancement for both staffing and resources. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of physical education; they apply this knowledge very successfully in their teaching. This has a positive impact upon the pupils' and students' learning. For example, in Year 13, the teacher's very good knowledge of training schedules challenged students, which enabled them to successfully devise appropriate schedules for different performers. Teachers usually have high expectations of both effort and behaviour of students and as a consequence students work hard and produce good results in a range of activities. Good questioning by teachers reinforces the pupils' knowledge and understanding. For instance, during a Year 11 theory lesson, the teacher probed and challenged the pupils' knowledge of open and closed skills. Planning and organisation are good; they ensure progression and continuity from year to year. However, teaching methods within the GCSE theory element do not always sufficiently involve the pupils in their learning; teachers, at times, teach directly to the examination syllabus and do not put the learning sufficiently in context. They focus on just one aspect, and not on the big picture, and there are instances when pupils are forced to be too reliant on their teacher, reducing opportunities for them to learn in an active way. Good relationships, good subject knowledge, high demands and good evaluation of students work ensure all students, including those with learning difficulties, make progress in their learning. Teachers make good use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual pupil's needs. Overall, teaching is supported by the pupils' good and often very good behaviour and their strong and positive attitudes to the subject.
149. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of the department has a very clear educational direction for the subject; the department is very well organised and successfully managed. The advantages of Sports College status are successfully used; enhanced staffing allows for small teaching groups, weekly professional development and time for supporting teachers in the feeder primary schools. Teachers are well deployed and good use is made of the range of facilities so that pupils receive a good broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The curriculum embraces the changes made by the recent curriculum 2000 update; however, further development is needed in order to bring assessment in line with this change. Whole school policies of literacy and numeracy are underdeveloped as are the aspects of spiritual and cultural development. Very good examples of reflection and of pupils wanting to be part of a quality dance sequence are seen in Years 10 and 11; however, in other aspects of physical education, things like appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of oneself and other others are not apparent. There is insufficient use of ICT, which constrains the investigative aspects of examination courses by pupils themselves, who have to rely on teachers to obtain up to date information from the internet. Sufficient opportunities are given for physical recreation during curriculum time in the sixth form. Sixth formers use this option well, especially high attaining students, many of whom represent the college in inter-school fixtures; other students make good use of a recreational programme. The department offers a very good and varied range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all students, which enhances the curriculum, giving opportunities to consolidate and extend the work covered in curriculum time. Sports College status greatly enhances and extends the curriculum for all pupils and students, as there are increased opportunities for working at the highest levels with both teachers and national coaches. The monitoring of teaching is good. Both the head of department and other members of the department successfully undertake it; there is also structured peer observation. As a consequence, teachers have good up-to-date knowledge of most aspects of physical education and of teaching methods which underpin good learning. The sports hall, artificial playing area and swimming pool are good features of the accommodation; however, changing accommodation is frequently insufficient to meet the need of numbers

timetabled to take part; this causes delays to the start of lessons as pupils wait to change. The absence of a dance studio constrains the development of the dance curriculum. The location of facilities on a split site causes big time losses. Location of facilities severely constrains learning and places additional pressure on both teachers and pupils.

150. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection; the majority of issues raised have been successfully addressed. The standards of teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Examination results show significant improvements. There has been improvement in both the curriculum and assessment, although further development of the assessment is now needed in order to meet requirements of curriculum 2000. Improvements have been made in the provision of successfully accredited sport leadership courses. There have been many other significant improvements, for instance, Sports College status. Teachers work hard and effectively as a team and are very committed to the raising of standards in physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

151. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above what is expected by the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Standards by the age of 16, as measured by GCSE examination results and by inspection evidence, are also above average. Students currently studying religious education in the sixth form are attaining above average standards. Successful strategies designed by the department to tackle the issue of the boys' underachievement have resulted in similar attainment of boys and girls. Throughout the year groups, there are good and very good examples of thoughtful oral work, and of insightful and sensitive writing. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language show a good grasp of areas studied and a good insight into the issues where the implications of living out a faith are discussed.
152. The achievements of pupils in all key stages are very good. Pupils with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language make similar rates of progress to those of their peers. Progress is particularly noticeable from Years 7 to 9: pupils in Year 7 achieve average standards, but, by the time they leave the key stage, they have made very clear gains in their knowledge and understanding and are above average. At all key stages, pupils show a thorough grasp of the teachings of Christianity and other world religions. Progress is seen in lessons and from year to year with the level of extended writing increasing greatly from Year 7 to Year 9. Pupils also become more confident in other aspects of literacy by the time they finish their Key Stage 3 course in religious education. In Year 9, they explore concepts such as right and wrong through the study of a particular moral issue (such as capital punishment or the use of animals for food) and show a good grasp of how different religions view such dilemmas. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 expand these horizons by further probing of others' beliefs and through exploring religious perspectives on issues such as suffering, human rights and using non-violence to right wrongs. Pupils are forming their own ideas on issues and are applying their knowledge to current situations. Students in the sixth form are beginning to effectively identify questions of meaning and to think about some of the reasons underlying events or moral dilemmas and their significance for us today.
153. Pupils in religious education are enthusiastic, eager to learn and tolerant of each other's beliefs. Classroom relationships are positive. They respond well to difficult challenges, such as thinking through issues related to animal rights or the right to have a child, and in so doing, explore ways in which other faiths approach such difficult matters. Some pupils in Year 7 lack self-confidence and are sometimes anxious to be right. However, by the end of the key stage, the vast majority of pupils have gained in confidence and self-esteem.
154. The quality of teaching at all key stages is very good and occasionally excellent. Preparation and planning are meticulous, enthusiasm is a characteristic of all lessons, and demands are sustained. Clear exposition coupled with effective questioning and prompting in the best lessons seen makes pupils think. There are occasionally missed opportunities to drive the pupils' learning forward by the use of questioning and discussion. Lessons build on the pupils' knowledge and experience, and appropriate strategies are used to ensure that content and approaches are

matched to the pupils' needs. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils began with a brief task which got them to think about the nature of forgiveness and responded with considered views on whether Myra Bindley should ever be forgiven. Lessons in Years 10 and 11 effectively address the requirements of the examining body, evident, for example by the use of project monitoring sheets which help pupils to manage their coursework or by the clear exposition of the difference between description and explanation. Many contemporary examples or shared experiences are used to show how belief affects people's lives and actions. Students in the sixth form, for example, are enabled to discuss difficult issues with sensitivity and maturity. Approaches to assessment are rigorous but sensitive to the nature of the subject. There is some excellent practice in the assessment procedures and in the way assessment is used to inform teaching. The teachers' subject knowledge is secure and there is clear evidence of effective team work and a commitment to the subject.

155. The leadership of the subject is excellent. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Statutory requirements to teach religious education to all registered pupils are met in Key Stages 3 and 4. The introduction of the new sixth form curriculum has had an impact on the college's ability to deliver religious education to pupils who have not opted to take it as an examination subject. There is a very clear sense of purpose and direction in the department and a commitment to raising standards. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Respect for other cultures and faiths is embedded in the way in which other religions are studied. Religious education is a strength of the college.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

156. A number of vocational courses are available in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. For Key Stage 4, this section covers business studies GCSE and GNVQ foundation and intermediate leisure and tourism. For the sixth form, this section covers advanced options in business studies and economics and the vocational options available in business, health and social care and leisure and travel. There is also a wide range of other non National Curriculum subjects taught in the sixth form, including sociology, geology, media and film studies, psychology, drama, government & politics and general studies. Reference to some of these subjects is found in other parts of the report, such as standards, teaching and learning, and curriculum. During the inspection, Year 12 intermediate vocational students following options in business and leisure were undertaking their work experience placements and no lessons were observed, though written work completed by students was seen. Vocational education was not included in the previous inspection report.
157. In 2000, the attainment of GCSE business studies pupils is well above average for grades A*-C and A*-G. All pupils gained at least a G grade, with over 75 percent gaining grades A* to C. The results for boys and girls are similar. A-level results in business studies are average for both grades A and B and A-E. As most of the candidates were boys, comparisons of performance based on gender are invalid. A-level economics results are well below average, with no A or B grades being awarded. The pass rate is only 75 percent. For intermediate vocational students entered for three different courses (business, health and social care and leisure and tourism), completion rates are high, with nearly 90 percent of candidates gaining accreditation. Less than 20 percent of students, however, gain merit grades, or better. This outcome is below average. Results for the two advanced vocational options show a below average completion rate of only 60 percent, but over half of all candidates entered gain merit or distinction grades. Results are well above average in the health and social care course, but are well below average in leisure and tourism, where the majority of students did not finish the course last year.

158. In work seen, the standards reached by present pupils in Key Stage 4, in both Years 10 and 11, in business studies is above average, but for pupils on vocational courses, standards are below average. Many of the pupils following vocational options have lower levels of prior attainment, but their progress and achievements are sound. Most business studies pupils have developed a good, basic understanding of how business works and they can use appropriate language in context. For example, most pupils can identify different forms of business such as partnerships and private and public companies. Higher ability pupils can identify strengths and weaknesses of different forms of business. On the rare occasions when standards are less good, the behaviour of small minority of mostly boys disrupts the learning of all students. In all vocational areas, pupils are grasping basic facts. For example, in a foundation class, pupils could identify advantageous and disadvantages in the use of alcohol. Intermediate level pupils showed knowledge of different forms of marketing. Good work is also being undertaken to improve key skills especially in the use and application of ICT. Literacy skills are also improving. Less emphasis is placed on numeracy. For standards to improve further more emphasis needs to be placed on the quality of evaluative work undertaken, especially by intermediate pupils and examples should be embedded more consistently in the vocational context.
159. Standards are average for A-level business studies. Most students display good subject knowledge, but their analytical skills need further development. The attainment of advanced level vocational students is likewise average. Again they are developing good factual knowledge and their key skills; their use of ICT is progressing especially well. However, their analytical and evaluative skills are less strong. For example, travel and tourism students can identify long haul holiday destinations and they know that the variety of destinations is increasing. They are less confident at explaining the underlying economic, political and social factors that have led to increasing demand overall, but changes in the geographical pattern of demand. The intermediate vocational students' standards are below average. Work seen indicates that basic ideas are being covered and that their planning is adequate. Their evaluation of their work is less strong and this aspect needs developing. The standards of economics students are well below average in Year 13, but are above average in Year 12. The former has suffered from staff changes and it is evident that coverage of basic analytical skills was not undertaken in sufficient depth last year. This deficiency has been remedied in Year 12.
160. Teaching of vocational education is satisfactory, but it is stronger and more consistent in Key Stage 4 where the standard of teaching is good. During the inspection, most lessons were at least satisfactory, with 60 percent being either good, or very good. Many strong features of good teaching emerge. These include good planning, a desire to challenge and the successful use of a variety of teaching methods designed to capture the pupils' interest and retain their concentration. As a result, pupils are learning and achieving well. Teachers are also contributing well to the development of the pupils' key skills, especially ICT and literacy. In the better lessons, the pace of work is good. For example in a Year 11 business studies lesson, all pupils displayed good knowledge about types of firms. Many students could identify how firms might grow in size. The quality of learning was reinforced by the thoughtful questions that were asked and by the research references they were given. In a Year 12 economics lesson, learning was enhanced by the quality of reading material issued and by the emphasis placed on using the correct terminology. A good explanation was offered to highlight the importance of distinguishing between saving and investment - two terms that A-level students frequently confuse. Where teaching is less effective, planning is less thorough and less attention is placed on detail. In a Year 13 economics lesson on price theory, insufficient emphasis was placed on using accurate terminology and some of the explanations offered lacked clarity, and, consequently, the students' rate of learning declined. On other occasions, lessons are too teacher-centred, or disruptive behaviour is not effectively controlled. In such cases learning suffers and the pace of the lesson is slower. In most lessons good teaching enthralls the pupils and students; as a result, their learning benefits.

161. Vocational education makes a good contribution to the education of many pupils and students. The expansion of vocational options in the curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 4 is widening their choice and increasing their opportunities for progression post 16. These developments have enhanced the curriculum. Vocational education is also making a good contribution to the development of basic skills, especially literacy and the use and application of ICT. More needs to be done to ensure a fuller coverage of numeracy, especially in Year 10. Assessment procedures are good and vocational students in the sixth form have a good understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. More use should also be made in the sixth form of data to monitor progress and more monitoring of teaching throughout the department should be undertaken to ensure consistency and to offer an opportunity to share good practice. The accommodation for vocational education is good and most classrooms are both large and suitable for their purposes. However, some Year 10 classes are taught in a non-specialist room. This accommodation is unsuitable because there is no access to ICT equipment and teachers find it difficult to refer to the sources needed to enliven their lessons.