

INSPECTION REPORT

COTTENHAM VILLAGE COLLEGE

Cottenham, Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110867

Headteacher: Mr. Tony Cooper

Reporting inspector: Mr. Martin Beale
19385

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th January 2000

Inspection number: 186835

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: High Street
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Cambridge

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. John Harradine

Date of previous inspection: 5th – 9th February 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cottenham Village College is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16. There are 902 pupils on the roll making it larger than other comprehensive schools without a Sixth Form. The attainment of pupils on entry to the college is above average overall. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and three pupils have English as an additional language. There are 15 children from the traveller community on the school roll. Two centres for pupils with special educational needs are part of the college. 206 pupils have special educational needs, a proportion that is above the national average, and 56 have statements of special educational needs, which is well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cottenham Village College is an effective school. Strong leadership generates a positive atmosphere in which pupils give of their best and achieve high standards. Standards are high largely as a result of the very good teaching that takes place throughout the college. The college's strengths far outweigh any weaknesses and it provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Most pupils achieve high standards, with particularly high attainment in the creative arts.
- Much of the teaching is of a high quality; teachers create a purposeful environment for learning and conduct lessons at a lively pace.
- There is strong and effective leadership from the headteacher, senior staff and governors, which provides the college with a clear direction and enables the pupils to achieve high standards.
- The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided are very good, effectively supporting both the pupils' academic and personal development.
- The college is a caring community, which gives good support to its pupils throughout their time at the college.
- The most able pupils are challenged and supported well in mathematics and science.

What could be improved

- English results are above the national average at GCSE but they are not as good as those in other subjects; they are below those in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and below the national average.
- Boys are achieving significantly lower results than girls at GCSE, the gap being greater than nationally.
- Although the provision for pupils with special educational needs is strong in many ways, some areas are in need of development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has tackled vigorously the key issues and other areas for development from the last inspection in February 1996.

Standards overall at Key Stage 3 are similar to those at the last inspection while they have improved at GCSE. The variable standards previously reported in information technology (IT) skills are now more consistent. A gap has emerged in performance by gender with girls achieving much better results than boys at both Key Stage 3 and GCSE. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, the minor weaknesses reported in some lessons having been eliminated. More consistent standards are being achieved in design and technology. Marking is now at least satisfactory with some being very good. Spiritual and cultural developments are more widely promoted and statutory requirements for religious education are being met, although there is insufficient time for a small number of pupils at Key Stage 4 to study the locally agreed syllabus in sufficient depth. The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship. The identification of

staff development needs and the monitoring of faculties, while informal, is effective. The minor health and safety matters have been dealt with.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	C

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

Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been consistently above average and often well above average in mathematics and science. Results in English have been weaker and were below the national average in 1999; consequently, although the overall results for all three subjects were above average in 1999, they were well below those in similar schools.

GCSE results have shown an improvement since 1994 and are well above the national average. A gap between the performance of girls and boys has emerged during this period. Girls' results have improved considerably over this period, while boys' results have shown little change. Art results have improved over the last three years and those for German and geography have been consistently the subjects in which the pupils have performed best. Pupils have achieved less well in English and design and technology when results are compared with those in their other subjects, although they still achieved results above the national average. A group of high-attaining pupils take mathematics and science in Year 10 and most achieve grades A* or A.

The percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A* - C at GCSE is well above the average of all schools and above the average of similar schools. The percentage gaining five or more GCSE grades at all levels is in line with the national average and well below similar schools. This reflects the high number of pupils with special educational needs who achieve at least one GCSE grade, but not five.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils at both key stages are keen and motivated to learn, and are interested in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The college is friendly and happy; pupils behave well both in lessons and around the college.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils are mature and articulate; they respond well to the many opportunities to take responsibility. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and their teachers are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is slightly above the national average, and unauthorised absence is below average.

The college encourages all pupils to show respect for each other and for all staff. The majority of pupils respond well, making the college a calm and purposeful establishment in which all can learn. Guidelines for unacceptable behaviour are clear and the level of exclusions is very low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teachers adopt varied and interesting methods and activities for all pupils. Lessons are lively and pupils learn rapidly. Very good subject expertise coupled with high expectations enables pupils to be challenged. Teachers use questioning very well to direct the pupils' thinking and to promote their understanding. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs in lessons and in withdrawal sessions is good. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Numeracy teaching is good throughout the college. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98% of lessons seen. It was good in a third and very good or excellent in a further third of lessons. Pupils learn new skills and techniques rapidly. They consolidate this learning well and work with effort and enthusiasm in all subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good at both key stages. Statutory requirements are met. The school has sought imaginative ways of broadening pupils' experiences, and exploits opportunities within the community very effectively.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The college is committed to meeting the individual needs of all pupils with special educational needs; the provision for pupils with special educational needs has strengths and scope for further development.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' personal development is very good, with particular strengths in social and cultural provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The college is a caring community, which gives to its pupils good support and attention throughout their time at the college.

All pupils have a broad and balanced programme of study. The college draws effectively on its strong links with the community to enrich the curriculum, broaden pupils' social development and provide opportunities for them to exercise responsibility. Innovative arrangements for personal and social education have a powerful impact on raising pupils' awareness of social and moral issues. The pastoral and academic lives of the college are closely entwined with some very good monitoring of the pupils' personal and academic progress. There are strong and coherent pastoral arrangements with good communication between all staff. Arrangements for the welfare of pupils and to promote their health and safety are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very strong leadership and a clear educational direction. He is ably supported in this by an effective senior management team. The line management of faculties and other areas of the school is effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The Governing Body is very effective. The committee structure and close links with faculties enable planning to be well informed and the work of the school to be carefully scrutinised.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, senior staff and governors have a very good understanding of the college's strengths and have taken effective action to eliminate any weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning of a very tight budget is carefully carried out. The college uses its limited resources well.

The headteacher leads the college very well and along with other senior staff and governors plans developments well. There is a positive ethos in the college and a strong commitment to high achievement for all. Great care is taken over financial planning, and value for money is sought at all times, although the college has not formally adopted the principles of best value when allocating resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. • Parents feel that the college is well led and managed. • They judge teaching to be good. • They find staff approachable. • They fully support transfer arrangements into the college from primary school. • Their children like going to the college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are concerned about the amount and quality of some of the homework that pupils are set. • Some parents feel that the college does not work closely with them.

Parents are mostly pleased with the college and the education that it provides. The findings of the inspection support this view. Parents speak highly of the arrangements for the induction of pupils into Year 7, the pupils supporting this view. Inspectors judge that pupils are able to make a good start to their learning at the college because they have become familiar with both their surroundings and many of their teachers by the time they start. Parents' views on homework are mixed. Some feel there is not enough, others that there is too much. The inspection team found that suitable homework is set, although there could be a greater challenge for the more able in some subjects such as English. The inspection team could find no significant evidence to support the view of some parents that the college does not work closely with them. College staff monitor the pupils' personal and academic progress carefully and seek parental support at the earliest sign of any problems.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Most pupils achieve high standards, with particularly high attainment in the creative arts.

1. The standards achieved by pupils at the college are high. They are above the national average in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and well above average at GCSE. In the national tests for 14-year-olds, results have fluctuated in mathematics and science over the last three years, between being above average or well above average. Results in English have, however, lagged behind and in 1999 were below average. They have fluctuated considerably over the last four years and have caused the trend in the college average points score for all three core subjects to be below the national trend. Boys' results in English have been below girls' for the last four years, the gap being greater than nationally except in 1999. Although boys did better than girls in mathematics and science in 1999, there has been no significant pattern to any variation over the last four years. The national test results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well below the average of similar schools, but this comparison does not take into account the high number of pupils with special educational needs in a college with very favourable socio-economic characteristics.
2. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average, the exception to this being in 1997 when boys' results fell considerably. The trend over the last five years in the college's average points score per pupil has been increasing, but by a slower rate than nationally, largely because of the 1997 fall. A significant gap has emerged between boys and girls over the last six years. While girls' results have climbed steadily and at three times the national rate, boys' results have fluctuated considerably and are below the 1995 level. Boys' results in 1999 were above the national average and girls' results were well above the national average. The gap between their results is wider than at Key Stage 3, and is increasing. Standards in subjects have been largely consistent over the last three years, the main exception to this being in art, where results have improved considerably since 1997. The pupils entered for German, geography and art did much better than in the average of all their other subjects in both 1998 and 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving A* and A grades in art, German and humanities (although from a small entry) in 1999 was more than double the national average. Pupils have achieved less well in English, English literature and design and technology than in their other subjects, but still achieved results which were above the national average.
3. A group of more able pupils is identified, usually about 20 in each year group, who are accelerated in mathematics and science to take GCSE in Year 10. These pupils generally achieve A* or A grades. They subsequently follow a more flexible programme of the single sciences in Year 11 along with statistics GCSE and an introduction to A Level mathematics. The results at GCSE in the single sciences and statistics are very good, few pupils failing to achieve at least a grade C.
4. The standard of work seen in lessons during the inspection and in an analysis of pupils' work was also high. This was particularly the case in the creative arts subjects of art, drama and music. The high expectations that the teachers have of the pupils, the pace that they generate in lessons and the variety of methods used to interest and enthuse pupils contribute significantly to the high achievement of the pupils in

these subjects. Standards in art have remained high despite several recent staff changes. Good tonal drawings from carefully recorded close observations enabled many Year 9 pupils to produce self-portraits of a well above average standard. Year 11 pupils responded well when working on the theme 'Me, Myself, I', with many showing A* grade potential. Pupils achieve good standards in drama as in a role-play of the *Winter Legend* in Year 8. Many became closely involved in the plot and the atmosphere, gaining much from the experience. A Year 9 music lesson also produced a good standard of group performance on xylophones, the pupils playing with sensitivity and expression and listening well.

5. Most pupils have basic competence in language but there is a wide variation in standards. Pupils speak with confidence, are good listeners, and are able to use specialist terms when appropriate. They are generally competent readers, able to derive meanings from a variety of texts. Research skills are secure. Many write fluently. There is some creative work of a high standard, but there is also a significant minority who are reluctant writers, unwilling to develop their ideas in detail. The effective implementation of the recently drafted literacy policy should help to raise the standard of accuracy of all pupils in all areas of the curriculum.
6. Pupils' number skills are good, with some quick mental recall particularly from younger pupils, but equally some excessive use of the calculator by pupils at Key Stage 4. Pupils apply their skills well to the solution of mathematical problems and to support learning in other subjects such as science. The pupils' information technology (IT) skills and their use to support learning in other subjects are improving considerably because of the co-ordinated teaching of IT across the curriculum.

Much of the teaching is of a high quality; teachers create a purposeful environment for learning and conduct lessons at a lively pace.

7. One reason for the high standards that pupils achieve at the college is the high quality of much of the teaching. The very good management of pupils and the varied and interesting teaching methods adopted engage pupils' interest and help them to work productively. In a Year 10 English lesson, the very good subject knowledge of the teacher and a lively exposition ensured that the pupils responded well and worked at pace. Very good control of the class ensured that all of the pupils concentrated fully. The skilled use of questioning probed the pupils' understanding and the teacher did not accept superficial answers or comments. This contributed effectively to the pupils' understanding of dramatic irony in the play being studied.
8. Many teachers provide lively and stimulating explanations of new ideas and generate a good pace to lessons, so that the momentum for learning can be maintained. This was seen to good effect in a Year 8 French lesson focusing on the consolidation and learning of vocabulary about houses and furniture. Skilled use was made of teaching in the target language. The pupils engaged well with a variety of oral tasks which reinforced the correct vocabulary. Good use was made of resources in a carefully structured lesson which included a wide variety of interesting tasks. The varied opportunities for the pupils to practise the use of the correct vocabulary in the correct grammatical context ensured that they learned the vocabulary systematically. The pupils listened well and responded in French whenever possible.
9. The excellent questioning techniques used, drawing out ideas and thoughts from pupils, directing their thinking and promoting further depth to their understanding, is a feature of much of the teaching. The teacher of a Year 8 drama lesson gave clear

explanations and questioned pupils carefully to remind them of previous work that they had undertaken as well as prompting their thinking. Praise was used well. With the high expectations of the pupils and the responsibility that they were given, pupils were able to focus on the role-play exercise in which they were involved.

10. Very good subject knowledge, coupled with high expectations of the pupils, enables them to be challenged. Teachers usually have clear objectives for the learning which is to take place in each lesson; these are used to give lessons a focus and appropriate activities, methods and resources to be chosen. Vibrant and dynamic music teaching for Year 11 pupils, rehearsing their GCSE solo performance, motivated them and made the subject exciting. Excellent feedback enabled the pupils to refine their work and achieve high standards. Very high expectations of the pupils and excellent subject knowledge contributed to an inspiring lesson. The pupils played with expression while others evaluated their performances, identifying strengths and weaknesses. The teaching encouraged and supported a real sense of musicianship. This enabled the most able to demonstrate high standards and confident playing, yet gave all pupils an excellent opportunity to improve.
11. Good in-class support is provided for pupils with special educational needs by both teaching and non-teaching staff. Staff are often linked to subjects in which they feel secure. Pupils with hearing impairment receive very good support when withdrawn from lessons for teaching in the centre. A Year 10 pupil with impaired hearing responded very well to the very good support that he received in a withdrawal lesson reinforcing gender bias within vocabulary. The teacher was sensitive to the pupil's difficulties whilst providing a clear focus and a sense of purpose. The lesson was carried out at a good pace and challenged the pupil. The teacher was very secure in her knowledge of how to approach the pupil's difficulties. Clear communication helped the pupil to discriminate between different vocabulary and understand the subtleties of the language used.

There is strong and effective leadership from the headteacher, senior staff and governors, which provides the college with a clear direction and enables the pupils to achieve high standards.

12. One of the main reasons for the success of the college is the strong leadership of the headteacher. He is ably supported by effective senior and middle managers and a well-informed and fully-involved Governing Body. The college has a clear sense of direction and a purposeful atmosphere in which all pupils are encouraged to give of their best and achieve high academic and personal standards. This is built on a foundation of trust, where strong relationships are established and where the contribution and achievements of individuals are valued. Raising standards is central to the college's work, yet target setting is not being used fully as a vehicle for this. Targets at GCSE, agreed with the local education authority, require little improvement to be made and present the school with little challenge.
13. Senior staff have a very good understanding of the college's strengths and have taken steps to eliminate weaknesses. Although standards are high, there is no complacency. At the headteacher's prompting, staff are continually seeking ways in which all pupils can achieve more both academically and in their personal development. The line management by senior staff of the work of faculties and of the pastoral system is very effective. Much of this is carried out on an informal basis, but this is very much its strength. Communication between staff is very good, enabling

senior staff to have a good understanding of what is happening in the school and to respond quickly and vigorously to difficulties. Members of the senior management team are linked closely to faculties. By attending meetings and informal daily discussions they are able to support the work of faculties while ensuring that they have a clear picture of any weaknesses and areas for development. Middle managers are treated as the senior professional in their area and are trusted to manage accordingly. They share the corporate responsibility for ensuring that pupils achieve high standards. An annual staff review is used as a further way of identifying progress made and areas for staff development.

14. The Governing Body is very effective. It has established close links with all areas of the school. This has enabled governors to gain expertise and an understanding of the work of each faculty, and a good insight into the college's strengths. The committee structure is effective in supporting both short-term and long-term planning, and scrutinising the work of the college and the standards being achieved. As with communication within the school, the informality of the relationship between staff and governors, who are regularly to be seen in the college, is a strength.
15. The funding available has consistently been very tight and has required very careful financial planning over many years. There is rarely any substantial funding available for new projects once teaching and other fixed costs have been accounted for. The college's creativity in seeking community support and exploiting other sources of funding has enabled a new IT suite to be introduced, enhancing the opportunities for pupils to develop IT skills and to use computers to support their learning in a wide range of subjects. Although not formally following the principles of best value, the Governing Body strives hard to achieve value for money from the spending decisions that it takes.

The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided are very good, effectively supporting both the pupils' academic and personal development.

16. The college has an imaginative view of the curriculum as a vehicle for promoting high standards. A creative approach has been adopted to the challenges of the National Curriculum. The college continually seeks ways of providing varied and stimulating learning opportunities for all pupils. This begins with the humanities course in Key Stage 3, which, while covering the National Curriculum requirements for both history and geography and also the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, seeks to forge links in teaching between the distinctive nature of each subject.
17. The college has taken a new route this year for the teaching of personal and social education (PSE) following unhappiness with the previous arrangements. Instead of weekly PSE lessons, the normal timetable is abandoned for one day each half term. This enables varied and interesting activities to be provided and expertise to be extended by the use of outside speakers. Parents, pupils and staff speak highly of the experiences of the three days that have taken place this year and all see this as a step forward. One effect of this is to provide an extra lesson each week for other subjects at Key Stage 3. The extra drama lesson in Year 8, for instance, is used as a further opportunity to develop themes of a personal, social and moral nature.
18. There are no weekly religious education lessons at Key Stage 4 for all pupils. Instead, the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are covered in the humanities

and religious education options and the guidance programme. All pupils, therefore, receive their entitlement, although for some it is not sufficient for them to study the subject in any great depth.

19. The teaching of information technology (IT) is another area approached creatively by the college. There is no discrete IT teaching but all departments contribute to the teaching of the necessary IT skills in the context of learning in their subject. This makes the learning of IT more relevant to the pupils, enables them to understand the applications of their skills and supports their learning in other subjects. This arrangement has been particularly effective at Key Stage 3 where pupils learn and apply IT skills well, but has not yet had the same significant impact at Key Stage 4, although standards are satisfactory.
20. The college values its place as a focal point for the community. It draws on and exploits any opportunities that the community might provide for extending the learning of its pupils. Those with particular expertise participate in PSE days and many pupils undertake service in the community, which contributes to their personal development. Particularly creative links are developed to provide educational experiences for pupils in the Alternative Education Unit.

The college is a caring community, which gives good support to its pupils throughout their time at the college.

21. The college works hard to ensure that all pupils can give of their best and achieve their potential, in whatever field that might be. The strong and effective pastoral system supports the development of pupils throughout their time at the college. Good communication between heads of year, form tutors, heads of faculty and senior management ensures that the pupils' needs and problems are known and can be dealt with effectively.
22. The support for pupils begins before they start at the college. The excellent arrangements for the induction of pupils from primary school into the college are regarded highly by both parents and pupils. All prospective Year 7 pupils spend a week in the college in the summer term before their entry in September. During their week in the college they are taught by college staff, the theme for the most recent intake being 'building construction'. The pupils become familiar with their surroundings and many of their teachers by the time that they enter Year 7. This enables them to make a good start; they approach their new school with confidence and settle quickly into the routines and requirements of the college. The sharing of expertise with feeder primary schools and the collection of information about new pupils strengthens these links.
23. The college also has good links with the providers of post-16 education in the area. Pupils are provided with good support and advice to plan the next stage of their education. These links are used to particularly good effect to provide courses, tailor-made for each pupil, in conjunction with the regional further education college. This enables pupils who are part of the alternative education programme, and who might otherwise be lost to education, to continue studying courses which they often continue post-16. The college works hard with this group of pupils, who have often been permanently excluded from other schools, and has much success, even if not in terms of GCSE results, with them.

24. The pupils' personal and academic progress are both carefully monitored. Any underachievement is quickly identified through the regular monitoring of the effort that pupils are making in each subject. Steps are taken to support these pupils and tackle the reasons for any underachievement. Parents are kept informed and their support for their child sought. Parents confirm that they are informed rapidly of any incidents that occur and that the school is keen to enter into a partnership with them to support the pupils' learning and development. This has a significant impact on the behaviour of pupils, their attitudes to their work and the subsequent good progress that they make.

The most able pupils are challenged, stretched and supported well in mathematics and science.

25. The college has a good programme to support the most able pupils, which is particularly successful in mathematics and science. All faculties are expected to contribute to the programme, and most either provide particular activities, often extra-curricular, or try to adapt teaching so that these pupils are challenged. This is effective to a certain extent but is not always followed rigorously. The more concrete challenge provided in mathematics and science, where the most able pupils take GCSE a year early, is very effective. Parents speak highly of the support that the pupils receive and the flexible nature of the courses that are then provided in Year 11.
26. This programme is particularly effective where the pupils' understanding and thinking are challenged and stimulated. The success of this programme has enabled the college to identify a group of talented pupils in Year 8 who are targeted for even faster acceleration. Stimulating teaching is enabling these pupils to broaden and deepen their mathematical understanding in particular. In a lesson observed, very good understanding of the subject material enabled the teacher to challenge the pupils' thinking through a balance of probing and open-ended questioning. Explanations to the whole group or individuals were brisk, with reference made to previous work undertaken. The pupils rose to the challenge, entering into perceptive discussions with the teacher about the difference between rational and irrational numbers. Some of this small group made huge leaps both in their understanding and their insight into the properties of these numbers. Even when some concepts were difficult or the questions hard, the pupils persevered, asked questions of each other and the teacher and learned much.
27. The programme and the teaching are less effective when pupils are taught work from a higher level in the National Curriculum, without any adaptation. In other words, more of the same at a higher level. Thus a mathematics lesson for Year 10 that merely followed the course that pupils might follow in Year 11, lacked challenge consisting as it did of repetitive exercises. While mathematics and science lend themselves more to this pattern of acceleration, other faculties are able to contribute in other ways. Although all have plans, these are not always rigorously implemented or their effectiveness monitored.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

English results are above the national average at GCSE but they are weaker than those in other subjects, and they are below those in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and below the national average.

28. Results in English at GCSE are above the national average but are regularly lower than those in other subjects, particularly mathematics and science. They are also considerably below these subjects at Key Stage 3. Fewer pupils achieve high levels in English at the age of 14 than in mathematics and science. The college has identified these weaknesses and has put into place several strategies to raise standards. These are appropriate but have either not been in place for sufficient time to bear fruit or are not being followed rigorously and consistently.
29. Although monitoring of pupils' progress takes place at Key Stage 3, this needs to be based on more thorough assessment and the setting of more specific individual targets which are then shared with all pupils. The more able pupils need to be extended more effectively, particularly through the setting of more challenging homework at Key Stage 3. A consistent approach needs to be adopted to the presentation of work, with increasing opportunities for pupils to develop the skill of writing accurately at first attempt. The college's literacy policy has much to commend it and now needs to be rigorously implemented.

Boys are achieving significantly lower results than girls at GCSE, the gap being greater than nationally.

30. Over the last five years the achievement of girls at GCSE has shown a considerable increase, much faster than nationally, while that of boys has shown little change. The college is aware of this widening gap and has started to investigate reasons why this might be. At present the college has insufficient data to establish why boys' achievements are lower than girls or in which part of the college the gap begins to occur. It has not been able therefore, to analyse information known about all pupils from their entry to the college, through the Key Stage 3 national tests and to GCSE.
31. Many boys are reluctant writers, not just in English. Some teachers almost accept that this is the case and do not do enough to raise expectations of the boys' application to writing.

Although the provision for pupils with special educational needs is strong in many ways, some areas are in need of development.

32. The school is fully committed to inclusion and equal opportunity; it embraces pupils who have been excluded from other schools as well as those with special educational needs. This leads to several clear strengths in provision. The school makes very good use of external agencies and adopts a creative and flexible approach to the curricular needs of individual pupils. In-class support by support teachers and assistants is effective. Collectively, there is a good level of expertise amongst support staff. There is some very good practice, especially in the support and organisation of provision for pupils with hearing impairment.
33. The decision taken to place the co-ordination of special educational needs with a

member of the senior management team has served to raise the profile of special needs provision; however, some aspects of co-ordination require a greater knowledge of assessment and target setting. Individual education plans provide useful information to subject teachers and support staff, but they contain no targets. They do not, therefore, directly support teachers' planning in the way that they should, or provide a means of regularly measuring pupils' progress and refining support.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The college should now:

1. implement vigorously the measures partly in place to raise standards in English, by providing a greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3, monitoring pupils' progress through more rigorous assessment and the setting of more specific individual targets for pupil improvement, and increasing the opportunities for pupils to develop the skill of writing accurately at first attempt;
2. raise boys' achievement by using assessment data to identify any under-achievement and setting targets for individual improvement, requiring faculties to identify possible teaching methods to support boys' learning, and in particular raising staff expectations of boys' application to writing in all subjects;
3. build on the strengths in the provision for pupils with special educational needs by ensuring that all individual education plans contain targets based on clearly assessed needs, and that they are used to measure pupils' progress and refine the support that they receive.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	28	33	32	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	902
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	51

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	56
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	206

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	42
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	103	91	194

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	51	70	62
	Girls	56	59	55
	Total	107	129	117
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (67)	68(66)	62 (65)
	National	63 (65)	62(59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	17 (41)	41 (44)	36 (36)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	60	71	61
	Girls	63	62	56
	Total	123	133	117
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	65 (64)	70 (70)	62 (66)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (29)	43 (48)	37 (35)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	78	85	163

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	41	68	75
	Girls	57	81	83
	Total	98	149	158
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (64)	91 (95)	97 (98)
	National	46.3 (46.1)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE points score
Average points score per pupil	School	43 (44.1)
	National	37.8 (36.9)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	3
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	864
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	9	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.49
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	34
Total aggregate hours worked per week	947

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.1
Key Stage 4	19.0

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2210334
Total expenditure	2174797
Expenditure per pupil	2483
Balance brought forward from previous year	-31183
Balance carried forward to next year	4354

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	902
Number of questionnaires returned	190

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	55	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	58	11	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	51	25	3	4
The teaching is good.	30	66	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	55	16	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	28	7	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	43	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	48	18	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	44	46	4	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	54	5	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	44	13	2	9

Other issues raised by parents

Parents speak highly of the induction programme. They feel that it gives the pupils confidence when starting in Year 7, having been made to feel secure in their new surroundings and familiar with teaching staff and college routines.