

INSPECTION REPORT

FROGMORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Yateley, Camberley

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116442

Headteacher: Mr P Green

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield
7070

Dates of inspection: 5th – 8th March 2001

Inspection number: 186965

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Potley Hill Road Yateley Camberley Hampshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Lister
Date of previous inspection:	26 th February – 1 st March 1996

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7070	Mrs J Greenfield	Registered inspector	Vocational courses	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14756	Mr J Lovell	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20709	Mr D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
3643	Mr D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19983	Mr H Webb	Team inspector	Science	
27748	Mr S Singh Minhas	Team inspector	Information technology Business education English as an additional language	
3569	Mr A Shield	Team inspector	Art	
7531	Mrs E Cole	Team inspector	Design and technology	
31218	Dr T Allen	Team inspector	Geography	
30794	Mrs G Murray	Team inspector	History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
4617	Mrs R Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18984	Mr D Adams	Team inspector	Music	
18755	Mr R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	
1517	Mr D Griffith	Team inspector	Religious education	
13101	Mr M Kell	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Frogmore Community College is an average-sized mixed comprehensive school catering for pupils aged 11-18. It has 926 pupils on roll, of which 89 are in the sixth form. The college population has increased considerably since the last inspection. It is a popular, oversubscribed school and the movement of students in to and out of the school, other than at the normal points of transfer, is not extensive. The school serves a mixed housing area, mainly to the east of the town of Yateley. Students come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, although the majority are from economically advantaged homes. Between five and six per cent of students are eligible for free school meals which is well below the national average. Students' attainment on entry to the college is broadly average. Two hundred and sixteen students have special educational needs, which as a proportion of the number of students in the school, is slightly higher than average. A significant proportion of these students have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Fifteen students, a lower proportion than average, have a statement of special educational need. The proportion of students speaking English as an additional language, at around 1.3 per cent, is low. Four out of the 12 students are at an early stage of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Frogmore Community College is a good school that is well led and managed. Its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Governors and staff are committed to improving standards and create a positive climate for learning, which ensure that students achieve above average standards through the good quality of much of the teaching. The college provides good value for money, and the provision for the sixth form is cost effective.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average overall and students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.
- The good quality of much of the teaching ensures that most students are making good progress.
- The headteacher, with the support of the senior management team, leads and manages the college well.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are good, and are particularly good in music and physical education.
- The college makes good provision for students' moral, social and cultural development.
- Students' attitudes to work and relationships in the college are good.
- The support provided for students with special educational needs is good.
- The governing body provides effective support to the college and knows its strengths and weaknesses well.

What could be improved

- The provision for information and communication technology does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- The systems to monitor and support students' academic progress are not systematic enough.
- The individual education plans of students with special educational needs are not clear enough.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not rigorous enough.
- Statutory requirements are not met in the provision of design and technology at Key Stage 4, religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and a daily act of collective worship.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in February 1996, the college has maintained its high standards in the National Curriculum tests and improved its performance, broadly in line with the national trend. Over the same period, the GCSE results have also been well above average, although there was a dip in performance in

2000. Performance at A-level has remained close to the national average in most years, but also fell in 2000.

The teaching has improved considerably and makes a strong contribution to students' above average attainment. The college has made satisfactory progress in implementing most of the key issues identified in the last inspection report, although progress on some issues has not been as fast as might have been expected because of changes in the management of the school and the extended period of ill health of the present headteacher shortly after his appointment. Satisfactory progress has been made in introducing more formal monitoring and evaluation systems. Success criteria have been identified but need to be sharper. Good progress has been made in ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching, of schemes of work and in the use of assessment. Work in most subjects is now more carefully matched to meet the needs of different groups of students and progress on this issue is satisfactory. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably, but weaknesses remain in ensuring that students have access to all the requirements of the programme of study. The college does not fulfil the requirements for a daily act of collective worship and progress on this issue is unsatisfactory.

The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does. It has a very clear view of its priorities and, under the new senior management team and with the support of the governing body, it is well placed to bring about further improvements in its provision and the standards students achieve.

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	A	A	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	B	D	

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

Overall results in the national tests for 14 year olds have been well above the national averages for the last three years and have been improving in line with the national trend. In 2000, students' performance in English, mathematics and science was well above average and the college's overall performance compared with similar schools was also well above average. On the evidence of their current work, standards are above average in English, mathematics, science, history, French, German and music, and students are achieving higher standards than might be expected of their attainment on entry to the school. Standards are average in the remaining subjects.

The GCSE results have consistently been well above average since the last inspection, but dipped slightly in 2000 although remaining above average. The results in 2000 were affected by management changes and difficulties during the previous year, and consequently the trend in the college's performance over the past three years has been below the national trend. The school has set itself particularly challenging targets for the coming year for raising standards further. The strongest subjects in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were English language, mathematics, science, design and technology (resistant materials), catering, German, physical education and media studies. The weakest subjects were business studies and textiles, which were well below average. On the evidence of their current work, standards are well above average in German and are above average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and French. In the remaining subjects standards are broadly average, other than in ICT when they are below average, as students do not have sufficient opportunity to develop and apply their skills. Most students are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school but the higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

Since 1996, the A-level results have improved and have been close to the national average, although they dipped in 2000. In that year, there were few higher attaining students in the cohort and whilst the majority met or exceeded their targets, a significant number under-performed in relation to their GCSE performance. All students gained pass grades in English, art and design, geography, history, media studies, psychology and sociology, but few gained the higher grades of A or B. The small number of entries in many subjects makes comparisons with the national figures difficult. The GNVQ results were above average and were a considerable improvement over previous years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students are proud of the college. They are keen to learn, and undertake their work with interest and enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour, both in lessons and around the college, is good. Students are courteous and polite.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are positive and students work well together, both in lessons and in other college activities. Many students play an active part in the college and willingly accept responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance levels are similar to the national average as is the level of unauthorised absence.

In the past year, the level of exclusions has decreased considerably as a consequence of improved strategies to contain and deal with instances of poor behaviour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons, good in 51 per cent, and very good and sometimes excellent in 19 per cent. In 4 per cent of lessons, the teaching was unsatisfactory. Nearly all teachers provide challenging activities for students, which enable them to learn effectively in lessons and make good progress. The best teaching challenges students well, making intellectual demands on them and capturing their interest and attention. In such lessons, students of all abilities make very good progress and achieve high standards of work and response. The vast majority of students work hard in lessons and are keen to learn. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is predominantly good. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, although not consistently in every subject. The weaknesses in a small number of lessons stem mainly from difficulties in managing students' behaviour and response effectively and a lack of challenge in and focus to the work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced but does not fully meet statutory requirements. The quality and range of extra-curricular opportunities are good, and are particularly good in music and physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Students with special educational needs have full access to the opportunities provided by the college and they receive effective support to enable them to make good progress, particularly in their literacy and communication skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The college provides appropriate support for the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language, especially in the early stages of language fluency. Not enough attention is given to developing their higher order language skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is good. It is satisfactory for their spiritual development, but opportunities are missed in tutor time to focus on this aspect of their personal development and through the lack of a daily act of collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Systems for monitoring students' personal development are good and those for monitoring their academic progress are satisfactory, and improving. Procedures for health and safety and the written guidance for child protection matters are unsatisfactory.

The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements with regard to information and communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4, design and technology at Key Stage 4, and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Provision for students' personal and social education is satisfactory, and careers education and guidance are good. The college's links and partnership with parents are good, supported by good information on students' progress and achievements and on other aspects of the college's work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, supported by his senior management team, leads and manages the college well. The impact of middle managers in co-ordinating the work in their areas of responsibility is mostly good, but monitoring systems are not sufficiently robust or systematic.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are fully involved in the college and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively in the main but not with regard to collective worship, design and technology or information technology.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The systems for monitoring and reviewing students' performance and setting targets are satisfactory and are improving, as are those for reviewing the college's performance. Currently they are not rigorous enough as the criteria used are not explicit and shared.
The strategic use of resources	The college uses its resources satisfactorily. Financial expenditure is linked to the college's priorities and is carefully monitored.

The college has sufficient, well-qualified staff to ensure that it runs smoothly. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory. Accommodation is mostly satisfactory, but there is considerable pressure on space. Some aspects of the accommodation are not ideal and affect teaching and learning. Suitable

procedures are in place to ensure that the college obtains best value from its expenditure, enabling it to provide good value for money.

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 do their best, and make good progress. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem. • Their children like the college. • The teaching is good. • The wide range of activities provided outside of lessons. • The college helps children to become more mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that their children are required to do. • A closer working relationship established with parents.

Most parents are pleased with the college and the quality of education it provides. They express concerns about the drop in the college's performance in the GCSE examinations in 2000 but recognise that the results were affected by the turbulence surrounding the leadership and management of the college in the previous two years. Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents. Parents' views on homework are mixed. Some feel there is too much homework at times; others feel that there is too little, particularly in Year 8 and Year 9, and for the lower attaining pupils. The inspection team found that challenging homework is set in most subjects and found no evidence to indicate that it was excessive or inappropriate. Inspectors consider that relationships between the college and parents have improved in recent months and are now good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards in the college are mostly good. Students achieve well above average results in the National Curriculum tests and above average results in the GCSE examinations. Most students are on course to meet and the majority to exceed the expected standards by the ages of 14 and 16. In the majority of subjects, students are achieving higher standards than might be expected of them when account is taken of their attainment on entry into the college in Year 7.

2. Students' attainment on entry to the college is broadly average. This judgement is based on their performance in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and from the standardised scores of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs) taken in Year 7. Students make mostly good progress in their learning during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the college to reach above average standards overall by the age of 16, although not consistently in all subjects. In the sixth form, their progress is satisfactory and students' attainment is broadly in line with the expectations of the courses they follow.

3. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000 at the age of 14, when all students are taken into account, the results in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well above average for all maintained schools. When compared with similar schools, the results were also well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. With the exception of English and mathematics in 1998, when they were above average, the college's results since 1997 have consistently been well above average in all three subjects. Since the last inspection, the trend in the college's performance for all core subjects together has been broadly in line with the national picture.

4. The performance of girls over the past three years has been better than that of the boys when compared with their respective national figures, although not consistently from year to year or in individual core subjects. Girls performed better than the boys in mathematics in the Key Stage 3 tests in 2000.

5. In English, mathematics and science, the proportion of students reaching the expected Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above was well above average, reflecting the picture in the previous year. When compared with similar schools, the proportion gaining Level 5 or above was well above average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. At the higher Level 6 or above, the college's performance was well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science.

6. On the evidence of their current and past work, students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the standard expected nationally in English, mathematics and science, with a significant minority achieving well above average standards. This broadly reflects the standards in the national tests in 2000. Their attainment is also above the national expectation in history, French, German and music. In these subjects and in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, students are making good progress and are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. In the remaining subjects, including art, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and religious education, standards are in line with the national expectation and students are achieving appropriately in relation to their earlier attainment.

7. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 2000, the college's performance at five or more grades A*- C and for the average points score was above the national averages. At five or more grades A*- G and one or more grades A*- G, the results were broadly in line with the national averages. The results in 2000 were lower than the corresponding figures in 1998 and particularly in 1999 when they were well above average overall. The drop in performance in 2000, which was not reflected in the standards of work seen during the inspection, is likely to have been adversely affected by the extended period of time that the college was without a substantive headteacher and the subsequent illness, shortly after his arrival, of the current headteacher. Between 1997 and 1999, the

college's overall results, based on the average points score, have been well above average, and at times, in the case of five or more grades A*- G and one or more grades A*- G, have been very high in relation to the national figures. When compared with similar schools, the college's performance has been broadly average in relation to the average points score, but below the national average at five or more grades A*- C and one or more grades A*- G, and well below average at five or more grades A*- G. Although remaining consistently well above average, the trend in the college's performance at GCSE over the past five years was below the national trend, compounded particularly by the dip in performance in 2000 and to a slightly lesser extent in 1998. Students in 2000 did not do as well as their Key Stage 3 results would indicate.

8. The GCSE results in 2000 were above the national averages in English language, mathematics, science, design and technology (resistant materials), catering, German, physical education, religious education and media studies; were broadly average in English literature, art and design, French, geography and history; were below average in drama and theatre arts; and were well below average in business studies and textiles. Other than in physical education, where the results were better in 2000, the results in all other subjects were lower than the college's performance at grades A*- C in 1999. The results in drama were considerably lower than in the previous year.

9. There was very little difference overall in the performance of boys and girls in the 2000 GCSE examinations in relation to their respective national figures, but the average over the past three years indicates that girls are doing better than the boys. The performance of the girls was better than that of the boys in English language and literature, French, history and physical education.

10. Current and recent work indicate that students' attainments by the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the national expectation in German; above the national expectation in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and French; and broadly similar to the standard expected nationally in art and design, geography, history, music, physical education and business studies. There is limited evidence on which to make secure judgements about standards in religious education because of the modular arrangement of the course but, from the work seen, they are broadly in line with the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Although much progress has been made since the last inspection, students' attainment in ICT is below the standard expected nationally as they have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, either in discrete lessons or through other subjects, particularly in Year 11. In the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) Foundation and Intermediate courses in leisure and tourism, students are achieving appropriately in relation to the requirements of the course.

11. The results of students entered for two or more General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A-level) examinations in 2000 were below the national average. Over the last three years, the results have been close to the national average, but dipped in 2000. The profile for those students entered for A-level examinations indicates that there were few higher attaining students in the cohort and, whilst the majority met or exceeded their targets, a significant number of students under-performed. The numbers of students taking A-level courses were small, resulting in small teaching groups. Comparisons in relation to the national figures are therefore not very meaningful because of the low number of entries in some subjects. However, in art and design, English, geography, history, media studies, psychology and sociology, all students gained grades A-E, but very few gained the higher grades of A or B. All of the students following the GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate courses and the NNEB CACHE Diploma in Child Care and Education gained at least a pass, many with merit and a good proportion with distinction. This shows a considerable improvement over the college's performance in previous years.

12. Students' attainment in their sixth form course work is broadly in line with expectations for individual courses in English, science, art, geography, history, religious education and sociology; above the standard expected in theatre studies, information technology, business studies, physical education, in the small amount of students' work seen in psychology and the CACHE course; but below expectations in mathematics and French. Students in Year 12 following the GNVQ Intermediate Leisure and Tourism course are achieving in line with expectations.

13. The higher attaining students are making good progress in English, science, history, geography and French at Key Stage 3 through the challenging work that they are given. However, they are not

challenged sufficiently in mathematics, design and technology, and ICT. Average and lower attaining students are generally making satisfactory progress throughout and are being extended well in English and science. Students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language are given appropriate work in most subjects to enable them to make satisfactory progress in lessons and generally good progress when they are withdrawn for more direct support. Boys are doing less well than the girls in art and design, history and religious education.

14. The provision for developing students' skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in subjects other than English is satisfactory. Although there is no whole-college policy for literacy, several subjects actively encourage the accurate use of vocabulary through the display of key words and insistence on their correct use. Teachers of both history and geography provide tasks for students to practise a range of writing skills, including note taking, letter writing and reporting. Ample opportunities for discussion are given in music, personal and social education and art. Once a week, students in Key Stage 3 participate in a reading programme as part of the college's literacy initiative. Overall standards of literacy skills are above average at both key stages, but there is scope for many subject departments to give them a greater emphasis.

15. In dealing with the everyday demands of numeracy, the students' level of competence is in line with expectations in mathematics, music and science at Key Stage 3. It is above average in design and technology, geography and science at Key Stage 4. Students handle number and measurement, mentally, orally and in writing, well in design and technology and geography, and do so satisfactorily in mathematics and science. Calculators are used accurately and well. Spatial awareness is developed effectively in graphics through the drawing of nets of solids. In art, most students have a good understanding of proportion and perspective as a consequence of good teaching. Students make very good sense of information presented numerically and graphically in science, particularly in Key Stage 4. In design and technology and mathematics, achievement in numeracy is in line with expectations. Statistical information in everyday contexts is handled very well in mathematics and science. It is also handled very well in geography, from bar charts in Year 7 to correlation coefficients in Year 13. Overall, the development of students' numeracy skills is not pursued actively enough in many lessons, with missed opportunities observed particularly in design and technology and history.

16. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, with some students making very good progress. All students supported by the learning support department obtained five or more GCSE passes at grades A*- G in 2000, and one student with special educational needs achieved passes in three A-level examinations. By the ages of 14 and 16, students with special educational needs have made better progress in English than in mathematics compared with their levels of attainment when they enter the college. This reflects the additional literacy support many students receive when they are withdrawn to the learning support department during Key Stage 3.

17. The college does not track effectively the progress made by students with special educational needs. For example, it has not compared the progress made by students who are withdrawn to the learning support base with the achievements of those who are not. Similarly, it has not compared students' achievements in Key Stage 4, when they are no longer withdrawn, with the progress they made in Key Stage 3 when they had the benefit of one-to-one support and small group work. Consequently, the college cannot accurately assess the effectiveness of its learning support department in raising standards.

18. Students learning English as an additional language, especially those in the early stages of English fluency, are making satisfactory progress through the specialist support that they receive. Their progress in lessons, especially in acquiring higher order skills, is less assured as they receive insufficient help from subject teachers. As a result, they are not achieving as well as they might.

19. The evidence from the inspection indicates that the college continues to maintain its standards at an above average level, despite the drop in performance in public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form in 2000. The college has set itself particularly challenging targets for the coming year and is on course to get very close to achieving them although reaching them will require considerable further effort.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Students at the college enjoy their schooling. They are proud of the college and, during the inspection, many of them showed a ready willingness to talk about their work, the facilities they are offered and their involvement in the daily life of the college. Students make visitors feel welcome and often enquire if they may be of help. Movement around the college is orderly. Lunchtime behaviour is well mannered and pleasant. College and personal property is respected.

21. Behaviour throughout the college is good. Students work well. They concentrate on tasks, respond willingly to questions and co-operate together productively. When required they are able to work independently. Their attitudes are very positive. The great majority of students are well motivated and keen to be successful at school. Examples of poor behaviour are the exception rather than the norm and are almost entirely restricted to a small number of students, some of whom have been excluded. The number of exclusions has reduced significantly since last year when they were higher than average for the size of school. There are no permanent exclusions this year but eight students are currently excluded for fixed periods of varying length, mostly for consistently poor behaviour or for bad language. Some parents express concerns about standards of behaviour but the college has taken appropriate steps to contain poor behaviour and to reduce the number of exclusions. Swift action is taken to remove a troublesome student from a class to a supervised work area so that the learning of other students is not disrupted. The behaviour and discipline policy has been reviewed and exclusion is now a carefully managed and staged procedure used effectively as part of an overall strategy to promote high standards of behaviour. In the great majority of classes, good management results in good behaviour and thorough learning. There are few instances of bullying. Parents agree that any incidents are dealt with quickly and efficiently.

22. Students respond well to the opportunities provided for their personal development and students at all levels are involved in the life of the college. Sixth formers are good role models for younger students. They play an active part in the college and are pleased to accept responsibility. They act as mentors for students in Year 7 and Year 8, who willingly trust them to deal with problems. They also support paired reading groups and homework clubs. They effectively run their own affairs through the sixth form council. They regularly organise social and charitable events, for example, providing support for the Marie Curie Daffodil Day. Prefects, chosen from Year 11, contribute to the smooth running of the college, for example, by organising the dinner queues. Students in each year are elected to represent their forms on the various college councils. Year 10 students said how much they enjoy meeting senior staff and sharing in decisions which affect the whole community. Currently Year 10 students are exercised about mobile phones and litter. A Year 7 student explained, with delight, how, as a sports representative, he selected his form teams for inter-form games competitions.

23. Relationships are good throughout the college. Students co-operate well in class. Sixth formers, in particular, are prepared to divide work and share information with their fellows. Teachers are very approachable. They know their students very well and recognise problems early. Students appreciate the individual attention they receive. Many lessons are marked by great good humour.

24. Attendance is broadly satisfactory, although lower than at the time of the last inspection. In the last reporting year, overall attendance at 93.3 per cent and unauthorised absence at 0.4 per cent were similar to the national averages. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits, with some absence for holidays. Students arrive in classrooms punctually and sessions begin on time. These levels of attendance are having a positive effect on students' learning and their attainment.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The overall quality of the teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to the good progress that the majority of students make in their learning. Across the college as a whole, the teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons; good in 52 per cent; and very good and sometimes excellent in 19 per cent. In 4 per cent of lessons, mainly but not wholly in Year 7 and Year 9, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. As a result of the good quality of much of the teaching,

students learn effectively in the vast majority of lessons, acquiring new skills and consolidating previous learning.

26. The college has improved the quality and consistency of teaching since the last inspection when it was satisfactory overall, by reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching from around 20 per cent to 4 per cent and increasing the proportion of good and very good teaching from nearly 50 per cent to 71 per cent. These improvements are due to the emphasis that the college has placed on improving lesson planning and ensuring that the work is more appropriately matched to meet the needs of students of different levels of attainment so that they are adequately challenged, weaknesses that were identified in the last inspection report. Most teachers are providing more opportunities than previously for students to work independently and sharing the learning intentions of lessons more effectively with them. Students have responded positively to these improvements.

27. There is no significant difference between the teaching in the two key stages and in the sixth form, although there is a slightly higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3. All of the teaching in Year 11 and in the sixth form is at least satisfactory, with a high proportion of it good or very good.

28. Although there are some differences between the key stages in a few subjects, the teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), German, music, physical education, business studies, drama, sociology and in the NNEB CACHE course. In art, the teaching is satisfactory overall, but good at Key Stage 4. In French, the teaching is satisfactory overall but more variable, with examples of good and very good teaching balanced by some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 9 and Year 10. The teaching of vocational courses and religious education is satisfactory overall. The teaching of personal and social education is satisfactory overall, with the majority of it good at Key Stage 3. In the learning support department, the teaching is good. There is insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement about the teaching in psychology although evidence from students' work indicates that it is good.

29. There are examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching in a number of subjects, including some lessons in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern languages, music, physical education, religious education, business studies, the CACHE course and sociology. In these lessons, students make particularly good progress in their learning and achieve high standards. Where learning is most effective, teachers use the following strategies consistently and well. They plan and structure the work effectively to ensure that no time is wasted; outline the learning intentions of lessons clearly to students so that they are aware of what is required of them; provide a variety of demanding tasks to challenge and stimulate students' thinking and help them to learn; and use open-ended questioning effectively to explore students' understanding and help them to reflect and think more critically. Some of these strategies were seen to good effect in many lessons, including a Year 9 English lesson on *Macbeth* where the teacher allowed pupils to reinforce their own understanding by explaining changing relationships in the play but also challenged and stretched them particularly with regard to expression by saying *'That's a good point, but a Level 4 expression. How can you make it Level 6?'* In a Year 7 science lesson, excellent planning, preparation and explanations of high quality ensured that students of all levels of attainment made outstanding progress in their understanding of cell structure.

30. The weaknesses in the small number of lessons that were unsatisfactory are varied. They stem mainly from an inappropriate match of work and unsatisfactory class control in a Year 7 design and technology lesson; low expectations in a Year 9 design and technology lesson, which resulted in inaccurate work; not enough focus to activities in French lessons in Year 9 and Year 10, which failed to engage the students; unclear aims and an inability to maintain students' attention in religious education in Year 8 and a lack of adequate pupil management skills in Year 9; and low expectations of students' response in a personal and social education lesson in Year 7, which led to inappropriate and silly answers.

31. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and often very good and the majority use this knowledge effectively to challenge students' thinking and provide them with appropriate activities. Teachers' expectations are high in most subjects and rarely less than satisfactory. The teaching of the

basic skills of literacy and numeracy is generally good, although in some subjects, for example mathematics, French, music and religious education, they are not emphasised sufficiently in lessons. There are good examples of the use of word lists and writing frames to help students, particularly the lower attainers. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning in many subjects. Most lessons are carefully planned and have clear purposes to ensure that students acquire and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic way. Teachers provide a variety of appropriate activities and structure them well, using a range of approaches to maintain students' interest and enthusiasm.

32. Teachers manage their students' well in almost all lessons and ensure that they remain focused on the work being undertaken. They praise and encourage, and give them constructive feedback on their performance in order to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Marking is generally thorough. Homework is set regularly and is effective in supporting, extending and enhancing class work. Inspectors found no evidence to support parents' concerns that homework was excessive or inappropriate.

33. Other than in art, French and religious education, where they are generally making satisfactory progress, students are making good progress in deepening, broadening and applying their knowledge, understanding and skills. Most students are keen to learn and concentrate well in lessons, which ensures that they make good gains in their learning. In most, but not all, instances, they are working close to their capacity because of the demands that teachers make on them.

34. When they are taught in the learning support department, students with special educational needs achieve well because the overall quality of teaching is good, even though on occasions time is not used well and activities can become too pedestrian. All sessions in the department are characterised by very good relationships between staff and students and between students themselves. As a result, students have the confidence to express views and attempt work secure in the knowledge that support and encouragement is at hand. They have a good attitude to these sessions and behaviour is always good. Students learn well because teachers are skilful in choosing activities that reinforce and build systematically on their prior learning, and in providing texts and other activities that are appropriate to students' interests, needs and age. As a result, students know what they have to do and experience success.

35. Students with special educational needs in mainstream classes make steady progress over time, and in some cases good progress, because teachers are aware of students' needs and their learning targets, and have good classroom management skills. As a result, they are able to involve students with special educational needs in the full range of class activities. For example, a teacher deployed a learning support assistant particularly effectively to enable a group of 13 year-old students with special educational needs to participate fully in a drama improvisation. A modern language teacher's use of well prepared resources and very good presentation techniques ensured that a group of 14 year-olds achieved very well in a French lesson that considered illnesses and different parts of the body. The learning support assistants provide good support to students in lessons.

36. Students learning English as an additional language receive appropriate support from a specialist from the local education authority's central team who comes into the college one afternoon each week. Support by subject teachers is not readily evident and whilst these students have made significant gains in the early stages of English language acquisition, their ability to engage in and gain access to the National Curriculum or to make progress in lessons is too often left to chance. Teaching and learning resources within subjects are not adequately matched to the needs of these students to ensure that they develop and attain similar standards to that of their peers.

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

37. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements in all but three respects. It is enhanced at Key Stage 3 by the addition of German for the higher attaining students and drama. At Key Stage 4, a variety of GCSE courses are offered, including double science for all students, together with GNVQ Foundation and Intermediate courses in health and social care and

leisure and tourism. The opportunity to study two languages is available and 15 students study French and German in Year 10.

38. A reasonable range of courses is available for students in the sixth form, including 14 Advanced Supplementary (AS) courses and a GNVQ Intermediate course in leisure and tourism in Year 12 and twelve A-levels in Year 13. The comparatively small number of students in the sixth form necessarily limits the number of subjects that are available. General studies is an option taken by about half of the year group in Year 13. Enrichment courses and key skills are delivered through the personal and social education programme. Students in Year 12 follow an AS course in citizenship and communication skills, and in Year 13 a course in study skills. The CACHE course, the equivalent of two A-levels, leads to a NNEB Diploma in child care and education. The curriculum opportunities provided meet the needs and aspirations of this group of students. A high proportion of the students who apply are successful in obtaining places at universities and other places of higher education.

39. The total curriculum time available is above the nationally recommended figures and is sufficient for all subjects with the exception of German in Year 8, where one lesson a week does not provide adequate access to the language in the first year of learning. Similarly in design and technology at Key Stage 4, the lower than average amount of time affects standards in design and realisation, whilst in art, some lower attaining students do not have enough time to complete the work in the time available. The time allocated for information and communication technology at both key stages and the lack of cross-curricular opportunities for ICT in most subjects, other than music and geography, means that the college cannot guarantee full delivery of the programme of study. Since the last inspection, although no more time has been made available for music in Key Stage 3, the time allocated has been reviewed and redistributed. Departments have revised their schemes of work and curriculum planning is now good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, drama, geography, French, German, music and physical education.

40. Governors are aware of their responsibilities with regard to the curriculum and discharge them effectively, although at present they are not monitoring the provision rigorously enough to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Statutory requirements are not met in Key Stages 3 and 4 because not enough ICT is being taught either discretely or within subjects. In Key Stage 4, almost half of the cohort does not follow a course in design and technology and the recommendation in the previous report for increased provision for religious education has not been addressed, although there are plans to include more time in Key Stage 4 from next year. The sixth form curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements as insufficient time is allocated to religious education, which is taught through a module in the AS citizenship course.

41. Students are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7 and are set from Year 8 onwards. In Key Stage 3, these setting arrangements are good in science, where they enable students to move through the work at a quicker pace. They have a detrimental effect on the performance of average attaining boys in religious education and modern foreign languages, which are set against each other, with large numbers of boys finding themselves in the bottom sets for both subjects. In Key Stage 4, the setting arrangements in science, mathematics and history improve standards by enabling teachers to focus on particular groups of students according to their levels of attainment. This is particularly effective in a current Year 11 history set, where a group of average attaining students has been identified and is working well to improve standards.

42. Provision for students' personal and social education is broadly satisfactory. Development has taken place since the last inspection, which has meant that there is now good coverage of health and sex education. The school has recognised that with the introduction of citizenship there is now a framework against which planning can be checked. Schemes of work are co-ordinated by key stage managers with the support of heads of year and input from teachers and outside agencies. Units of work enable teachers to teach a curriculum that develops students' knowledge and understanding, personal skills and values and attitudes. All tutors are engaged in teaching this programme and are supported by regular staff meetings, which prepare them to teach each unit of work, and the provision of appropriate materials and resources. Heads of year monitor the teaching of the units through lesson observation and team teaching, but this is insufficiently systematic to ensure consistency of approach and to check the progress being made by students. The quality of teaching and learning in these lessons is generally satisfactory.

43. The quality of the work-related curriculum, which includes careers education and guidance, is good. Progress has been made since the last inspection. Careers education is now integrated with the units of work as part of the personal and social education course in Key Stage 3. The careers co-ordinator works with heads of year on the development of appropriate units of work to develop students' personal skills and equip them for careers work in Key Stage 4. In Year 10, students are appropriately prepared for a two-week period of work experience, which takes place during the first half of the summer term to allow adequate time for debriefing procedures before the end of term. The careers co-ordinator works closely with tutors to prepare them for working on this programme with the students. There are good systems for monitoring the programme. In Year 11, students are prepared for their transition to the sixth form and elsewhere. Units of work develop students' skills of decision-making, completing personal statements and interview techniques. Most sixth form students were clear about their strengths and weaknesses. The careers education programme is well supported by the local careers service and a wide range of local and regional businesses.

44. The range and quality of extra-curricular provision is good overall and very good in music and physical education. Large numbers of students attend activities such as a wind band, a steel band, a flute group and a string group. Extra-curricular provision is vibrant in physical education and in drama, and is very well attended. There is a wide variety of sporting fixtures and recent drama productions include *Alice's Adventures* produced by the lower college drama group and *True Love* currently in production by the senior drama group. There are good residential trips and exchanges to France, a three-day Year 9 earth science project, and a First World War trip to France as part of the geography curriculum. There are good inter-college competitions in science.

45. The college makes satisfactory provision to ensure that all students have equal access to the curriculum and other activities that it offers, although there are some unsatisfactory features. The group of Year 9 students that begin German as a second modern language miss the second religious education lesson that other students have. The needs of Year 9 students who have English as an additional language are not met in design and technology (graphics) because resources are not adapted and no additional support is provided.

46. The college provides good opportunities for students with special educational needs to benefit from the full range of activities that it offers. It makes good curricular provision for meeting the overall needs of its students as identified in their statements of special educational need. For example, this could include an identified number of hours of learning support in mainstream classes, or withdrawal on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. As many of these students' special needs relate to poor literacy skills, there is a very strong focus on learning communication skills when students are withdrawn. Students who receive this provision have their timetables changed regularly so that they are not always withdrawn from the same subject. Individual literacy needs are also well met through the short daily reading programme that a group of Year 7 and 8 students receive when teachers, support assistants, parents and sixth form students work on an individual basis with them.

47. The college's positive philosophy on including all students, and ensuring that those with special educational needs have the same equality of access to the full National Curriculum as their peers, is reflected in subject teachers' lesson planning. Teachers provide tasks and activities that enable students with special educational needs to have positive and successful learning experiences. In addition, these students have full access to the range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that the college offers.

48. Since the last inspection, the well established links with primary schools, and in particular the adjacent primary school, remain satisfactory and in many cases are good. The college and the primary school share the same campus and, as a consequence, they have very close links in relation to the provision of community facilities on the site. Constructive links with contributory schools benefit the transfer arrangements for students and their social development through joint activities, the sharing of facilities such as the music studio, drama studio, ICT facilities and the outdoor AstroTurf area. These links also include a shared curriculum focus, on an irregular basis, in areas such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, science, geography, history and art. The college supplements these links with presentations for parents of prospective students prior to transfer.

49. Links with the community are good and benefit the opportunities and facilities available to students. The college plays an important role in the provision of community education on the campus, through its involvement in the Community Management Committee and that body's partnership with the district and town councils and the Farnborough College of Technology. Through these links, members of the University of the Third Age provide support in various ways, such as helping with the homework club and involving students in gardening projects, which led to the development of a gardening club within the college. Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 are involved in the 'Kascades Restaurant' in which they plan, cook and serve meals for members of the community. Other useful links between the college and the community include the opportunity for students, who provide baby-sitting services, to attend and complete first aid courses offered by the adult learning service and for sixth form students to help in the creation of a web page and enrolment software to support the needs of community and adult learning.

50. The college makes good provision for students' moral, social and cultural development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual development. This supports the college's aims as a community college to equip students with an education for life, to celebrate individual excellence, and as being committed to involving all within its community.

51. There is an apparent lack of confidence in some staff to highlight spiritual development as an aspect of college life, due to uncertainty about their responsibility for it, their role, its application to their subject area, and the evidence required. Generally, teaching which explores values with students, inspires curiosity, and encourages students to reflect on their own and others' lives is not an explicit feature in the curriculum or in many of the lessons seen, although there are some positive examples. In drama, older students reflect on their lives in childhood very sensitively and effectively. In music, students are encouraged to reflect and comment on examples of music they listen to. In religious education, they are introduced to different aspects of the experiences of individuals, which have given rise to a sense of reverence. Through the study of the holocaust, students examine fundamental questions about human behaviour and the ways in which symbolism and community actions are used to express profound ideas and feelings. A GCSE dance composition, created and choreographed by students, used images of Buddha as its stimulus. In addition, there is a strong emphasis in the college on celebrating success, through a monthly congratulations page for tutors to publicise students' achievements both in and outside college, and regular award evenings to present certificates to which parents are invited.

52. The opportunity to underpin students' spiritual development with the statutory requirement for daily collective worship is still not in place. An appropriate theme for each week, supported by quotations, is provided for tutors. Tutor groups do not use this every day, although the students are not occupied fully during that time once the notices have been given and registers taken. More guidance is needed to encourage tutors to give their students more responsibility for developing the given theme together over the week using a range of methods and activities. The two group assemblies that were seen were based on the weekly Christian theme of friendship and the generosity of the human spirit in real life crises, and were linked to the college's aims. These assemblies were not adapted to the different ages of the students, and did not provide for student participation or allow them time to reflect.

53. The college provides a good framework of moral values for students, particularly in music and modern foreign languages where moral values are well promoted by teachers. In mathematics lessons, teachers provide good role models, promoting good standards of right and wrong. In English lessons, issues to do with right and wrong behaviour and its effect on others are explored in depth through the study of plays such as *Macbeth*, and through novels and poetry. In history lessons, students consider and respond to the behaviour and reputation of major historical characters such as Cromwell. In physical education, students learn about fair play, accepting decisions, and the etiquette required in games. Students are allowed to work in classrooms at lunchtimes, and have access to equipment and musical instruments. Generally in classrooms there is a good understanding of acceptable conduct, and honesty is part of the college culture.

54. Students' responsibility for behaving well and safeguarding the reputation of the college extends beyond the college gate. Students have a strong commitment to extra-curricular rehearsals and concerts. They show a good understanding of rights and responsibilities in the operation of the college council. They learn how to treat people who are different, particularly in religious education, geography

and mathematics, and the presence of students with a range of special education needs contributes to the personal and moral development of all students in the college.

55. The college provides good opportunities for students' social development. In physical education, students learn to participate as team members. There are youth clubs available for different age groups. The mathematics competitions at local and national levels encourage teamwork. Students work together in an annual rocket launching competition, and in a chef's challenge competition organised by Farnborough College of Technology. In Year 8, students have weekend trips to Swanage, where they are given challenging activities.

56. There are useful links with the leisure centre on the college campus, and sports activities include fixtures against local teams and the use of outside coaches. In geography lessons, students have their attention drawn to the need for responsible attitudes to the environment. The college takes part in the popular countywide Rock Challenge encouraging responsible attitudes to drugs. The college has an impressive record of consistent support for charities, including Comic Relief, UNICEF and Disability organisations, from the youngest student providing Christmas parcels to the sixth form support for a sister college in Uganda, another college in Sri Lanka, and support for a former student with cancer. Students go outside college to perform in the Steel Band at local primary schools, and the Trident scheme organises opportunities for older students to work voluntarily in the community. Pupils from the local primary school are welcome visitors to college events. The college was given the Schools Curriculum Award 2000, for drawing on the resources of the local community to enhance the learning experiences of students. There are numerous clubs for students to join, performances to take part in, and trips out of college sometimes include parents. The college councils are an effective way to involve students in whole college decision-making, and the prefect system gives students the opportunity to accept responsibility for promoting the ethos of the college.

57. The college's good provision for students' cultural development provides many opportunities for them to take part in their own and other cultural traditions of the area, in dramatic performances, musical concerts, and exhibitions of dance and gymnastics. Students go on visits to theatres in London and Woking. They enter national and European competitions such as the Leeds University Maths Challenge. Students visit France for languages, and have visits to Belgium, France and Italy for history. In English, there is a good balance between pre-twentieth century literature, and modern works. Physical education, through its selection of display materials and references to role models reinforces the multi-ethnic nature of Great Britain, but this is not a consistent enough feature of all subjects and their display and resource policies. Students are introduced to examples from different cultures and countries. They study world music. In physical education, students learn about different cultural elements in dance. In history, students study Native American culture. In religious education, students learn about the shared heritage of the three religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. In catering, students study food in different cultures. In geography, students study life in Egypt, Japan, Brazil and Bangladesh, and in English, they read poems from different countries and cultures. In art, students study aboriginal art. Generally, students are not taught sufficiently to recognise the contribution of many cultures to their subjects. Students are made aware of the Greek mathematicians when being introduced to the study of shapes, and references are occasionally made to the historical background to mathematics. They are given opportunities to appreciate the natural world and global warming through science, and through practical opportunities in English to explore and express their views on issues such as people's relationships with the animal world. Students visit Kew Gardens, and have planted a tree to mark the millennium.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

58. The college provides a good environment for students to learn and work. Staff know students well and expect high standards of all students in their work and in their behaviour and attitudes. Staff act as good role models. They are effective in promoting good standards of discipline and behaviour.

59. Teachers have satisfactory procedures for assessing, monitoring and recording students' academic progress. Those for monitoring their personal development are good. The college has identified inconsistencies in its practice and is undertaking a review of its strategies to improve the level of consistency and the quality of marking and assessment. Teachers maintain records in planners and

mark books, together with records of regular tests. These assist them in setting targets and identifying where support, such as 'Toe by Toe' reading support in Year 7, setting in mathematics or mentoring in Years 10 and 11, will benefit students' progress and achievement. Academic monitoring is closely linked with the procedures to monitor students' personal development and to identify links between their attitudes and their performance. The college has introduced additional testing and is using the results to evaluate how well students are doing and to measure their progress. These results are beginning to assist form tutors in setting meaningful targets for students and in monitoring their progress. Many departments, notably mathematics, offer students opportunities for additional support.

60. The educational and personal support and guidance given to students are good. The pastoral system is effective and well ordered, with good liaison between tutors, heads of year, heads of key stage and subject teachers. Students are confident that they can approach staff with any problems and feel that they are well supported. The regular monitoring and tracking of students' personal development and their work ensure that any points of concern are quickly noted and acted upon. A key element in the support for students is contact with parents, which is a strength of the system.

61. Support and guidance arrangements in the sixth form are good. Regular assessments, monthly interviews with tutors and half-termly action plans, with predicted grades, ensure that each student understands his or her academic position. Parents are kept informed. Advice on opportunities in higher education is given through the personal and social education tutorials in the summer of Year 12. All students have the opportunity to attend a higher education conference. In 1999, 39 out of 41 applicants went on to higher education. In 2000, 19 out of 23 applicants took up places on degree courses. Students currently applying have university offers in a variety of subjects. Of the six students on the CACHE course, three have offers for higher education and two have been offered employment. Appropriate careers advice is provided by the team of sixth form tutors as there is no designated careers adviser.

62. The monitoring of students' personal development, attitudes and academic progress takes place within a structured system that links tutors, heads of year, heads of key stage and the subject teachers. This system, combined with good personal and academic support and guidance, assists students to benefit from the educational opportunities offered by the college. The monitoring of students' academic progress and personal development is helping to improve standards and learning.

63. The college's overall provision for monitoring the academic performance and welfare of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Although the college makes good provision for meeting the overall needs of students as identified in their statement of special educational need, some of the monitoring and target setting procedures are less effective. The college meets its statutory requirements in terms of annual reviews and produces individual education plans as required.

64. The overall quality of the targets set at the annual review of a student's statement of special educational need is unsatisfactory. There is no coherent link between the targets set at an annual review, the individual education plan drawn up following that review, and the formal review of targets at the subsequent annual review. In addition, targets are not always student-focused so that there is some confusion between actions to be taken by adults on behalf of students and learning targets for the students themselves. These targets are not accurately reflected in individual plans.

65. Individual education plans contain some useful information but are unsatisfactory overall. Individual needs are summarised, test scores are provided, and the frequency and nature of additional support provided is quantified. However, they also have some weaknesses. In particular, they do not have clear, unambiguous targets that can be measured accurately against specified criteria. There are frequently too few targets for the anticipated time scale, and there is no progression in the challenge and nature of targets as students move through Key Stage 3 and from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. The plans focus too heavily on literacy because the college's annual review process fails to identify broad areas for target setting, such as literacy, numeracy and personal development, which can then be broken down into detailed targets with clear assessment criteria in individual education plans.

66. Current arrangements for monitoring the consistency of individual education plans are also unsatisfactory. The head of the learning support department produces plans only for those students who

have special needs other than emotional and behavioural difficulties. Heads of year are responsible for writing, monitoring and reviewing the plans for this group of students. The practice of reviewing individual education plans and resetting targets on an annual basis is unsatisfactory as the timescales are too long. These plans are not shared sufficiently with home.

67. Procedures for assessing students' achievements and progress within the learning support department are satisfactory. Teachers know their students very well and they use assessment during lessons very well to check on what students can do, know and understand. However, individual students' achievements are not reflected in lesson planning. These plans are not sufficiently sharp in identifying the anticipated learning outcomes for individual students in order to assess their progress in developing new skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers' lesson evaluations have limited value as they contain very broad references such as 'both students worked quite well today', rather than an analysis of the value of the activities, choice of resources and teaching methods used. These evaluations make no reference to students' learning.

68. Procedures for monitoring and promoting improved behaviour are good and have a positive effect on students' progress and achievements. The college's ethos and the high expectations of adults working within the college are successful in promoting good standards of behaviour and eliminating bullying and oppressive behaviour in and around the college and during lessons. The college has an effective discipline policy, which is consistently applied by staff and well understood by students. However, where lessons lack pace or challenge or where inappropriate management strategies are used, a small minority of students sometimes disrupt the learning of others, but such instances are usually well managed by staff. Students value the rewards, such as the 'congratulation' displayed in the dining hall and listed in the weekly bulletin, and the merit lapel badges, which they wear on their blazers with pride. They recognise that the sanctions are applied fairly. The effectiveness of these strategies and the good monitoring systems ensure that standards of behaviour are generally good. Effective personal relationships are promoted well through engaging students in their learning and providing opportunities for collaboration in activities such as drama.

69. The college has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is recognised and rewarded, and a regular analysis of attendance patterns enables staff to identify concerns. Parents are contacted in the event of any unexplained absences. In those cases where concerns are identified, staff work with parents and outside agencies to address them.

70. Whilst staff are vigilant in exercising their child protection responsibilities, arrangements for child protection and co-ordinating the monitoring of concerns are unsatisfactory. Guidance contained within the staff handbook is inadequate, failing to name the person designated as having responsibility for child protection. Reporting procedures do not meet requirements, although the college applies the local area protection committee guidelines. Action has already been taken by the college to address these weaknesses. The senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection has received appropriate training and updates but other members of staff, to whom responsibility has been informally delegated, have only received in-college training. The college has an appropriate policy for the use of force to control or restrain students who are in danger of harming themselves or others and all staff have been trained in its application. Outside agencies, including education specialists, the education welfare officer, social services and the health authority provide good support and advice for students.

71. Procedures for health and safety are unsatisfactory. Responsibility for health and safety has been informally delegated to the staff health and safety representative, who is conscientious within the scope of the limited training that she has undertaken. The college lacks a college health and safety policy and, whilst there are some good examples of safety being well promoted in lessons, in some areas, such as design and technology, insufficient attention is paid to promoting safe practice, for example in the wearing of goggles. Risk assessments are carried out for individual lessons, such as in science, but there are no whole-college risk assessments undertaken other than for residential visits, which are completed in accordance with the local education authority's insurance requirements. There are very clear and comprehensive contingency plans in the event of an escape from Broadmoor Security Prison. Fire extinguishers and physical education equipment are checked regularly and evacuation practices are carried out at least once each term. However, although informal and unrecorded checks of

portable electrical appliances are made on a termly basis, some equipment is not tested regularly and no records are available to show when the last testing was completed.

72. The arrangements for providing first aid are satisfactory. There is a well-equipped medical room and sufficient staff hold current first aid qualifications to ensure that a first aider is readily available throughout the day. First aid boxes are readily accessible throughout the college and meet requirements. Accidents are properly recorded but are not regularly reviewed to identify any potential risks.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

73. Partnership with parents is good and the college seeks to involve them in its work for the benefit of students. The partnership between college and home is promoted through the provision of helpful information on students' learning and through good communications about the work of the college. This partnership is reinforced by the home/college agreement, which has been completed by the majority of parents.

74. Responses to the parents' questionnaire generally express positive views of the college and these are particularly positive in respect of the high expectations of the college and the ease with which parents feel that they can approach the college with questions or a problem. They also make positive comments about students liking college, the good teaching, the progress that students make at college, the way in which the college helps students to become mature and responsible and the range of activities provided outside lessons. Evidence from the inspection supports these positive views. A significant minority of parents, however, express concerns about the homework arrangements and the closeness with which the college works with parents. The inspection team found no evidence to support these concerns.

75. Parental support for students' learning at college, at home and in their wider activities is good. This is demonstrated by the good support that parents provide with homework, the very high attendance at consultation evenings, of over 90 per cent of parents, and their good involvement in the process of setting and monitoring targets for students. The Parents' Association provides good support for the college through its fundraising activities such as sponsored cycle rides, skittle evenings and a Key Stage 3 sports evening when they take over a local sports centre. The monies raised are allocated on the basis of bids, which are evaluated in terms of the benefit they will provide to the college community. The support of parents is appreciated by students and staff and makes a positive contribution to students' progress and attainment and to the resources and facilities available to support learning.

76. The information provided for parents is good. Before students join the college, parents are invited to attend an induction evening. These are usually well attended. Throughout the college, there is a very good rolling programme of consultation with parents, providing three opportunities each year for parents to meet with staff. These meetings are very well attended. Annual reports provide good information about students' progress and are written with great care. Reports clearly set targets for improvement to inform how further progress can be made. Parents are fully involved in the process of target setting and review, being provided with good guidance on how they can use the report with their children as a basis for improvement. Staff try to ensure that parents are involved in their children's learning and make strenuous efforts to encourage all parents to attend consultation evenings. Teachers involve parents at an early stage in the event of any concerns being identified and are readily accessible to parents.

77. Information provided to parents about activities is satisfactory and newsletters provide useful information about college dates and events. A particular strength of the newsletters is the focus that each letter has on a particular issue in which parents can work with the college. Recent examples include guidance on developing good homework habits, preparation for examinations and revision techniques, and the dangers of platform shoes within the college environment.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

78. The college is well-led and managed. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction for the work and development of the college, particularly in relation to promoting high standards. He is effectively supported by his two deputy headteachers, both recently appointed, who have clearly delegated responsibilities. The headteacher and the deputy headteachers have complementary skills, work well as a team, and together convey a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to improving standards and the quality of education within the college. Other senior managers make an effective contribution to the day-to-day management and organisation of the college. There is a good delegation to staff with management responsibilities and, in most instances, there is effective follow-up to ensure that tasks are completed well.

79. Staff have a shared commitment towards providing the best possible opportunities for students to learn and develop. The college's mission statement refers to providing an excellent education, challenging all to achieve and make responsible choices. These aims are evident in much, but not all, of the work of the whole community. Students take some pride in belonging to the college and there is a clear sense of corporate identity and shared purpose. Relationships are good throughout. The college is committed to equality of opportunity and access for its students, but this is not always reflected in practice. Full access to all elements of the curriculum is not always achieved. For example, a high proportion of students in Key Stage 4 do not follow a course in design and technology and the college does not meet statutory requirements in this area. Teachers deal sensitively, but firmly, with any examples of biased behaviour or prejudiced comments.

80. The governing body undertakes its role in the governance of the college effectively and plays an influential role in its strategic management. Governors are strongly committed to the college and give good support to the headteacher and his senior staff. They have a very good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and, through their working practices, are effective in holding the college to account for the standards and quality of education it achieves. The governing body meets nearly all of its statutory responsibilities, but, as identified in the last inspection report, it does not yet meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. In addition, statutory requirements are not met in design and technology at Key Stage 4, information and communications technology at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

81. Staff have made considerable progress in extending the range of teaching approaches since the last inspection. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are developing but are not, as yet, sufficiently robust to gain a shared understanding of strengths and weaknesses. The direct monitoring and evaluation of teaching occur, both by senior managers and by subject leaders, supplemented by observations undertaken by LEA advisory staff, but not in any consistent way or using shared criteria to ensure that the process is sufficiently rigorous. The college is aware of this weakness and is reviewing its practice with a view to making improvements.

82. The college monitors and evaluates its performance effectively in the main, although there are some inconsistencies. The analysis and use of performance data in identifying strengths and weaknesses, especially in relation to students' progress and achievements and, as a consequence, departmental and teaching performance, are developing but not yet used rigorously or consistently enough to focus on areas where improvement is needed. Line management arrangements have been implemented and are improving, giving a better focus to whole-college developments and priorities. Subject leaders manage their departments well in most cases, but in art, drama and religious education where there are temporary appointments, their leadership and management skills, although satisfactory, have not yet had sufficient time to make an impact on the department's work. Although there are clear systems in place for reviewing the performance of teachers, performance management is only in the early stages of implementation.

83. The college is clear about its priorities and targets and has identified a number of strategic objectives to guide its work over the longer-term. These are relevant to the college's stage of development. The college improvement plan sets out the shorter-term tasks and activities for the next two years. It identifies timescales, costs and the person responsible for leading on each task, but lacks clear enough success criteria to enable the college to monitor effectively its progress towards reaching its targets.

84. The college's strategic direction and improvement plan refers to raising standards within an inclusive ethos, but it makes no direct reference to students with special educational needs. However, the learning support department has produced its own very detailed strategic and improvement plan based on the same strategic objectives as the college plan.

85. The college's special educational needs policy is very thorough and comprehensive, and is reviewed and evaluated annually. It identifies the need for the overall responsibility for students' learning to shift away from specialist learning support teachers to subject teachers, contains a very informative induction package for new support assistants, and identifies ways in which class teachers can deploy these assistants most effectively. College documentation, such as the prospectus and staff handbook make good reference to this group of students.

86. The college has effective provision for meeting the needs of its students with special educational needs and it has made satisfactory improvement in this provision since the last inspection. These students achieve well academically and make good progress in their personal development because the college is effective in meeting their diverse needs. This is made possible because the college has an inclusive philosophy and is moving towards ensuring that this is translated into reality in all aspects of its practice through effective leadership and management and the commitment of all the staff. The governing body has a good grasp of its statutory requirements regarding students with special educational needs and fulfils them well.

87. The match of teaching and support staff to the needs of the college is satisfactory. In most subjects teachers are well qualified, experienced and appropriately deployed. However, there are some weaknesses in design and technology, where there are difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified full-time staff. In modern languages, there have been a number of staffing difficulties in recent years. In English and music, well-qualified staff are a major factor in ensuring good quality learning. There are sufficient numbers of administrative and technical staff to ensure the smooth running of the college on a day-to-day basis.

88. The learning support department is staffed by well-qualified teachers and effective support assistants. It is well managed and led by the head of department who is also the college's special educational needs co-ordinator. She carries out very effectively the detailed local authority annual audit of students with special educational needs each autumn, and this determines the level of funding for special needs that the college receives. However, the college has not yet clarified the responsibilities of the special educational needs co-ordinator in two main areas of college provision. Her role and involvement in whole-college behaviour management, and the arrangements for monitoring and supporting those students with emotional and behavioural difficulties who are primarily the responsibility of year heads and tutors remain unclear. Current systems and processes do not enable this monitoring role to be carried out effectively.

89. Staff development procedures are satisfactory, although training is not rigorously focused on the improvement plan and performance management targets. Steps are being taken to ensure a closer match with the school's priorities. Records are kept of individual staff programmes, and funds are appropriately used. Procedures for inducting newly qualified teachers and those new to the college are satisfactory. The programme is suitably comprehensive and individual teachers report that they have been well supported.

90. Overall, the accommodation is sufficient to enable the college's curriculum to be taught, but there are some unsatisfactory features. Although there is some good provision, some aspects of the accommodation are not ideal. In some cases, the impact of the growth of the college by some 300 students since the last inspection has caused difficulties which are having an adverse impact upon teaching and learning. For example, some lessons are taught within areas through which adults and students pass to get to other rooms and this affects students' concentration. Similarly, pressure on space has resulted in the loss of facilities for the sixth form, which affects their access to computers to support their studies and the space available for private study. Some accommodation, such as that for mathematics, is spread out but this has no adverse effect on standards. The drama studio provides very good accommodation for practical work and is well equipped with lighting, curtains and flexible staging, but other drama is taught in a building that is loaned to the college and has no facilities for theatrical

presentation. It is some distance from the college, which results in about ten minutes loss of teaching time per lesson. The accommodation for geography is unsatisfactory because distracting noise intrudes and the rooms lack blackout, which affects the quality of vision when videos and television programmes are used to support students' learning.

91. The accommodation available for supporting students with special educational needs is limited. When all three teachers are working with students, the learning support department is too small for them all to be accommodated effectively. Therefore, one teacher has to work in the library, which is not wholly appropriate for providing focused support for these students.

92. Outdoor space is good and, combined with the facilities available in the community leisure centre, provides good facilities for physical education. The changing facilities, and in particular those available for boys, are cramped for the numbers using them and the boys' showers do not provide for individual privacy.

93. The level and quality of resources available to support teaching and learning are satisfactory, although there are significant variations between subjects. In English, there is a plentiful supply of video players and monitors and these are well used in the teaching of English and media studies. Resources in mathematics are satisfactory but there is insufficient access to information and communication technology facilities. Science resources are very good throughout. Resources for drama and music are good, and in all other subjects, other than ICT and design and technology, they are of sufficient range, satisfactory quality and are used effectively. In design and technology, there are weaknesses in providing for aspects of control and modelling for manufacturing. Resources for information and communication technology are unsatisfactory in that there are insufficient numbers of computers to satisfy demands, the quality of some equipment is below expectations and there is inadequate provision of technical assistance to deal with the numbers of malfunctioning machines. The absence of computers in many departments and the limited access to the computer suites severely restricts the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning.

94. The college uses its resources prudently, based on realistic financial planning. The college has a budget deficit, which was inherited by the current headteacher. The recovery programme has been fully agreed with the LEA. Financial planning is effective at college and departmental levels, and the college's educational priorities inform the setting of the budget. Priorities are clearly identified and correspond with the college's current needs. There is a close link between educational and financial planning, and specific proposals are costed appropriately. Priorities are appropriately related to raising standards of attainment. Specific grants are all used for their designated purposes.

95. Systems of financial control are satisfactory. There is an appropriate degree of liaison between the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Financial information is readily available and reports are analysed regularly by the headteacher and the chair of governors, as well as being presented to meetings of the full governing body. Financial procedures are well established and controls are operated with a high degree of efficiency. According to the chair of the finance committee, the most recent auditors' report concluded that financial administration is satisfactory. Appropriate procedures for ensuring that the college obtains best value for money, before committing itself to expenditure, are being implemented.

96. Overall, the college makes satisfactory use of its staffing, accommodation and other resources. The college uses its resources to good effect to support students' learning, and expenditure is concentrated on meeting educational needs. Day-to-day administration is unobtrusive but efficient, and enables the college to achieve its ends with the minimum expenditure of time and resources. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure, the good quality of education provided and the standards students achieve, the college provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97. The college should:

(1) improve the provision for information and communications technology (ICT) to meet statutory requirements by:

- reviewing the amount of time allocated to the teaching of ICT to ensure that students cover all the requirements of the programmes of study;
- increasing the range of resources available for the teaching of ICT; and
- ensuring that all subjects, especially in Key Stage 4, undertake the teaching and application of aspects of the programmes of study according to their agreed contract.

[Paragraphs: 10; 13; 31; 39; 40; 154; 156]

(2) implement more robust whole-college systems to monitor and support students' academic progress, by:

- making better use of performance and other standardised data;
- monitoring their progress on a more consistent and regular basis; and
- extending the role of tutors in monitoring and supporting students' academic progress.

[Paragraphs: 59; 63; 82]

(3) improve the quality of individual education plans for students with special educational needs, by:

- setting clearer targets with shorter timescales and reviewing them at least termly;
- extending the range of targets, beyond literacy, to encompass numeracy and, where appropriate, behavioural targets;
- extending their use by subject teachers in planning more appropriate work; and
- involving parents in contributing to their development.

[Paragraphs: 63; 64; 65; 66; 67]

(4) improve the consistency and rigour of the college's monitoring and evaluation systems, including the use of ICT, students' academic progress and health and safety, by:

- tightening the existing procedures and practices to ensure greater consistency of approach;
- developing and applying shared, consistent criteria, especially in the observation of classroom practice; and
- making better use of the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation processes to improve practice and performance.

[Paragraphs: 81; 82; 130; 138; 168; 196]

(5) ensure that statutory requirements are met in the following areas:

- the provision for design and technology at Key Stage 4;
- the provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; and
- provision of a daily act of collective worship;

[Paragraphs: 40; 52; 79; 80; 183; 185]

In addition to the key issues above, other less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the college's action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs 70, 71 and 88.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	184
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16	52	25	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	837	89
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	1
Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register	212	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	6.3
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.4
National comparative data	0.4

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	69	91

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	43	52	55
	Girls	84	79	75
	Total	127	131	130
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	College	79 (85)	82 (78)	81 (75)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	College	47 (38)	55 (53)	43 (32)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	32	52	54
	Girls	18	80	82
	Total	113	132	136
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	College	71 (47)	83 (80)	85 (84)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	College	37 (22)	53 (53)	61 (50)
	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	57	51	108

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	27	52	55
	Girls	30	47	49
	Total	57	99	104
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	College	53 (74)	92 (100)	96 (100)
	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	43
	National	38.4

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	College	0	n/a
	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	22	10	32

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	14.3	14.7	14.4 (17.2)	4.0	1.0	3.3 (2.9)
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	5	100
	National		tbc

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	915
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	54	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)	57.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	354

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	23.3
Key Stage 4	21.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	2,669,154
Total expenditure	2,638,934
Expenditure per pupil	3,037
Balance brought forward from previous year	(20,851)
Balance carried forward to next year	9,369

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	869
Number of questionnaires returned	183

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	54	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	43	8	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	61	12	4	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	61	21	3	2
The teaching is good.	25	63	5	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	45	13	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	45	7	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	38	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	54	18	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	21	52	14	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	56	5	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	46	4	2	6

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

ENGLISH

98. The English department is making a valuable contribution to the academic and personal development of all students in the college. In the national tests in 2000 at the end of Year 9, the performance of students overall was well above the national average and well above that for similar schools. Over time, the performance of both boys and girls at the end of Year 9 has consistently been well above average. In 2000, the results at grades A*- C in the GCSE examinations in English language were above the national average and broadly in line for literature. The college entered a larger proportion of its students for English literature than is entered nationally. During recent years standards have been consistently above average in English language and in literature. Results in media studies (a popular optional subject) have also been above average during this period. In the A-level examination in English language and literature in 2000, standards were below average but, over time, they have been in line with national expectations. Results in media studies at this level have been more variable, with above average performance in 1999 being followed by below average grades in 2000.

99. Progress is good during Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. On entry to the college, students' overall attainment in English is average. During the inspection the work seen in Years 7 to 9 improves well so that, by Year 9, it is above average, with one in four students attaining well above average standards. The great majority of students are articulate speakers and show good concentration when listening to the teacher and to each other. Standards of reading aloud improve during these years so that, by Year 9, the higher attaining students are able to cope with demanding texts such as *Macbeth* and confidently rephrase them in their own words. Overall fluency in reading is above average. Many students show a high level of appreciation of the use of language in poetry, plays and fiction. They speak and write with confidence about non-fiction texts such as advertisements and the media of television and films. Students develop above average skills in writing for different purposes and readerships, expressing original and challenging viewpoints on issues such as the 'generation gap'. They are able to produce authentic and mature examples of charity leaflets in Year 8. The majority of students develop a progressively wider vocabulary and most of them have mastered the skills of punctuation and grammatical accuracy by Year 9. In general, girls tend to write at greater length and take more care about spelling and presentation than the boys.

100. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in all key stages. By the end of Year 11, most students are able to write detailed and perceptive commentaries on the plays, novels and poems they study, showing, for example, an above average understanding of dramatic impact in Shakespeare and how the characters' words can indicate their state of mind. Their exploration of power and authority in *Oliver Twist* and *Lord of the Flies* shows excellent knowledge of the books and above average understanding of themes and relationships. Students of average linguistic ability show that they have gained exceptional understanding of the use of cinematic devices through following the media studies course. One boy whose expression was limited still managed to write a thoughtful and perceptive response to the poetry he had read on other lands and cultures. Progress is satisfactory in the sixth form. In their A-level English studies the highest attaining students use critical vocabulary with confidence, and they are able to relate their set texts to their wider reading in a relevant way. A Year 12 class made satisfactory progress in their understanding of the different dialects and how they implied social standing when reading and discussing *Maria Marten*.

101. Subjects other than English generally make satisfactory provision for developing students' skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Several actively encourage the accurate use of vocabulary through the display of key words and insistence on their correct use. However, there is scope for many subject departments to give greater emphasis to the development of students' literacy skills.

102. The teaching of English is good throughout the college, with some very good and excellent teaching at Key Stage 3. A secure climate for learning has been established in which students feel able to take risks and develop their thinking. In many lessons they are carefully grouped to ensure that they learn from each other. In the most effective lessons they are given a sequence of instruction and tasks

that enables them to build on previous skills and understanding so that they make very good progress. Teachers have good knowledge of individual students and appropriately high expectations of them. An appropriate range of tasks and teaching approaches enable students with special educational needs to succeed. The marking of students' work is generally thorough and encouraging, although during Years 7 to 9 there is rarely any specific advice on how to improve. Target setting for individual students is at a rudimentary stage, but this is an area that the English department is committed to develop.

103. Students respond very well to their English lessons during Key Stage 3. They show genuine interest and enthusiasm when watching or listening to other students contributing to the lesson. For example, when two talented students in a Year 9 class gave a modern rendition of a scene between Macbeth and his wife they received spontaneous applause. Students in a Year 7 lesson were totally involved in a 'spy hunt' that developed their skills in letter writing. Effective self-management was seen in a Year 8 lesson where the students organised their own group play-reading and welcomed in the late arrivals from an instrumental music lesson. Response continues to be good in Years 10 and 11, and it is very good in the sixth form. Students in Years 10 to 13 are sometimes able to take over and manage discussions for themselves, and there continues to be a high level of interest and involvement by the great majority of students. Behaviour in English lessons is very good throughout the college.

104. The department is well led and managed. A well-structured scheme of work enables students to develop a good balance of skills, knowledge and understanding in line with the National Curriculum. The department has created and maintained a good environment for learning with a very good quality of display, and the resources for learning - books and equipment - are well cared for. Since the last inspection in 1996, standards have risen at Key Stage 3. They have fallen slightly at GCSE, although in some years they have shown an improvement, and fallen in the sixth form. On the other hand, there have been several substantial improvements since 1996. Individual reading is more effectively encouraged in Years 7 to 9 and drafting of work is leading to greater progress in Years 10 to 13. Reading and writing are more closely integrated in the scheme of work. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Drama

105. Although drama is taught as a separate subject, it makes a valuable contribution to the skills and understanding required in English. The teachers' effective management, subject knowledge and a good sense of humour engage the students fully in their drama lessons. A climate of trust and mutual respect enables them to share their personal feelings in an open way. In lessons, the standard of performance in Years 7 to 9 is average and sometimes above average. In one Year 7 lesson, the high expectations and good management of the teacher led to excellent learning in collaboration and improvisation. During a Year 10 lesson, the exceptionally high level of involvement during the students' exploration of emotion memory enabled them to understand and reproduce the behaviour of much younger children very well in scenes from *Blue Remembered Hills*. At the end of Year 11 in 2000, standards were below national expectations in GCSE drama, but over time it has proved to be a reliable option for students wishing to develop their performing skills. There is currently a small take-up for A-level Theatre Studies, but a good level of achievement was seen in a Year 13 lesson.

106. The accommodation for drama is of contrasting quality. The majority of lessons are held in the Studio Theatre, which is an excellent facility. For two-thirds of the week, additional lessons are held in the Lodge, which is an open space some distance from the main campus in which there are no opportunities for using lighting or staging. These factors diminish the quality of learning to a significant extent. The college's curriculum is enriched by the extra-curricular opportunities offered by both English and drama teachers in lunchtime clubs and college productions.

MATHEMATICS

107. Standards in mathematics overall are above average by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 but are below expectations in the sixth form. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the results were well above the national average and above average when compared with those of similar colleges. Standards have risen at a faster rate than the national trend over the last three years. Over the last three years there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls but

girls performed better than boys in 2000. The girls' performance exceeded the national average for girls rather more than the boys exceeded the national average for boys. Standards in mathematics are similar to other subjects in the college.

108. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the results at grades A*-C were above the national average. The boys' performance was well above the national average for boys but the girls' performance was below the national average for girls. A similar difference between these boys and girls was apparent when they completed Key Stage 3. An analysis of the results of this cohort in relation to their performance in the Key Stage 3 tests indicates that students reaching Level 6 or above largely achieved a grade C at GCSE. This represents some underachievement by the higher attaining students. There were fewer students with the higher grades of B and above in 2000 than in 1999. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection even though the results in 2000 showed a reduction on those of the previous two years. Most students achieved grades A* - G, which was above the national average.

109. In the A-level examinations in 2000, the college's results were below the national average. Some students began the course with a lower level of algebraic skill than is normally the case. Half of the students performed in line with expectations and one student earned the higher grade B. The number of students on the course has been low for the last three years.

110. Standards of work during the inspection are above average by the end of Key Stage 3. Achievement through the key stage is good overall, although there is some underachievement, particularly in Year 7, as the teaching is not always focused on the needs of all the students in the teaching groups. Work set at the start of these lessons provides a good challenge to students of all attainments. The wide range of attainment produces a wide variety of responses. The higher attaining students solve problems quickly. The average attainers require more time and some trial and error in their work. Lower attaining students require some individual support to understand what they have to do, while students with special educational needs receive extra support in the class. The overall effect is some lack of productive learning time for the high attainers. The setting arrangements work well in Years 8 and 9 as teaching is focused more effectively on students' needs. The achievement of the low attainers and those with special educational needs is satisfactory in relation to their earlier attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3, lower attaining students and those with special educational need understand simple basic relationships which in some cases are rather simple and lacking in challenge. Average attainers take longer than necessary to focus their learning of new work as contributions to class discussions lack maturity. High attainers think analytically are keen to explore problems and find solutions.

111. From the current work, students' attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 4. Lower attainers do not reach satisfactory standards of numeracy. They have difficulty in the evaluation of ten per cent of a number, for example, and in understanding the basic concept of scale. They are not keen to work, as direct methods of teaching through appropriate questions are not used effectively. Average attaining students work hard and in many cases do extra work at home. The flexible setting arrangements are good and enable extra support for many of these students. This approach is raising standards. The department's use of assessment is generally good, although it is not used sufficiently to identify or inform planning so that action can be taken at an earlier stage in students' development. Higher attainers in Year 10 find some algebraic challenges difficult, as basic skills are not secure. In Year 11, high attainers show a good knowledge of the graphs of trigonometrical functions and are able to solve simple trigonometrical equations correctly. There are many opportunities for all students to receive extra support in their work outside normal lessons. This support is raising standards along with the challenge of the mathematical competitions organised by the department. Student achievement is good overall during Key Stage 4. The achievement of the low attainers and those with special educational need is satisfactory. Numeracy levels are satisfactory overall and well above expectations for many. From the work seen, standards in mathematics are above those seen in the Year 2000 examinations.

112. By the end of the sixth form students' attainment is below the standard expected for students on an A-level course. Numbers are low. Not all Year 13 students have a secure base of trigonometrical knowledge to use in the solution of problems, for example in integration. One student's attainment is high. Good support is provided for the study of further mathematics. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall as some students begin their course from a low prior attainment.

113. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. In many lessons attitudes are very good but are only satisfactory in a number of classes, mainly the low attainers. In some lessons, attitudes are excellent as students work quietly, neatly and well. They try hard in a very good atmosphere for learning, even when the work is difficult.

114. The teaching is good overall and good in each key stage. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. At times, this enriches the curriculum and adds to the interest of students in their work. Examples include the solution of equations in three variables, the origin of mathematical words and further reference to numerical methods in the sixth form. Teachers' technical competence in teaching basic skills is satisfactory throughout the college. Good standards are not always present, as oral revision of basic knowledge is not pursued long enough to become a firm platform for further learning at all levels of study. Conversely some basic work is at times too simple and lacks challenge. Teachers in many subjects contribute to the development of students' numeracy skills, although not always actively enough in many lessons, with missed opportunities seen particularly in design and technology and history. Students handle number and measurement well in design and technology and geography, and do so satisfactorily in mathematics and science.

115. Planning is a good feature of lessons. Overhead projectors are used well. Opportunities for discussion arise from prepared work on some topics such as graph work, which enhance students' learning. Teachers expect students to do well and the response is good. The management of students is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in a number of lessons is good or better. Management of low attainers in particular requires improvement if their achievement is to improve. Better use of the teaching time can be made in Key Stage 3, but generally time is used well. Computers are not used in the teaching of mathematics, which limits the pace and learning in some of the work. Good use is made of homework. Teaching has improved since the last inspection.

116. The leadership and management of the department are good. The monitoring of the subject's performance is developing well. There is a clear direction in the leadership and a commitment by the staff to high standards. This is clear since both standards and teaching have improved since the last inspection. There is room for further improvement in both.

SCIENCE

117. Standards in science are above average by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and are average in the sixth form. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the students' performance was well above the national average and also when compared with similar colleges. This picture has been consistent since the last inspection. In 2000, the proportion of students gaining grades A*- C in the GCSE examinations in double science was slightly above the national average, but showing a dip in performance compared to previous years. Girls achieved equally as well as the boys. There has been a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection. In the A-level examinations in 2000, the results in physics, chemistry and biology were below the national averages in all three subjects, although the small numbers entered for the examinations makes national comparisons very problematic. Fewer students gained the higher grades, and no student gained a grade A. Standards remain similar to those cited in the last inspection report and similar to most other subjects.

117. From the evidence of the inspection, students are making good progress in lessons and over time, and by the end of Key Stage 3 are attaining standards that are above national expectations. In Year 9, students identify and explain the different ways in which heat is conducted. They explain these phenomena by the way particles of matter behave in solids liquids and gases. They are able to link this learning with other areas of the curriculum, for example, with the talk given on fire safety by a fire officer in their personal, social and health education lessons. By the end of Key Stage 4, the standard of students' work is also above national expectations. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students are attaining higher standards than the GCSE results in 2000 would indicate. The students' experimental skills are of a very good standard. Many older students demonstrate insight and a strong sense of enquiry. They ask far-reaching questions and confidently explain difficult concepts. In Year 11, students carry out a series of experiments to investigate the effect of temperature on a chemical

reaction. They record their results accurately and plot line graphs from their data. They are able to explain how the temperature of the chemicals changes the rate of the reaction by considering the kinetic energy of the particles reacting together. In the sixth form, the numbers of students studying science are small and standards are broadly in line with course requirements, with some students in Year 12 demonstrating higher standards of work than the A-level results in 2000 would indicate.

118. Overall, the quality of teaching is good throughout the college and there are examples of outstanding teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers have very good knowledge across all aspects of the subject. They organise their students and manage classroom and laboratory situations to a very good standard. Consistently, teachers set high expectations for learning to which their students readily respond. The highest attaining students receive very good encouragement and support. Students with special educational needs are supported well, with individual attention given when they are working alone or in groups. Teachers use models and study guides particularly well to help students learn. For example, for homework a Year 7 class made models of plant and animal cells. The results were outstanding. The students had tackled this assignment imaginatively and their models showed a very good recognition of the major parts of a cell. A student's model of a nerve cell was instantly recognised when shown to the class.

119. Teachers have further developed their skills in teaching investigative science. Their training, through the Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) scheme, is leading to further improvements in the quality of learning for higher attaining students. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Consequently, the quality of learning is good throughout the college. Students respond well to the challenge of the high expectations for learning. Students of all levels of attainment, including students with special educational needs, make very good progress. In the sixth form, students make good progress with their studies. Throughout the college, students demonstrate a consistently increasing confidence in the development of their understanding of scientific concepts.

120. The majority of students are enthusiastic and keen to learn. During practical sessions, they work well in groups sharing ideas and supporting each other in their learning. Their work is completed neatly with good attention to recording observations accurately. All students take care with the equipment and carry out their experiments safely.

121. The curriculum is well planned and the schemes of work are matched accurately to National Curriculum requirements. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The standard of students' work is regularly monitored and recorded as they progress from year to year. After Year 7, students are taught in groups according to their levels of attainment. This enables them to have appropriate attention and support according to their needs. Regular assessment enables students to be correctly placed and appropriately challenged.

122. Some use is made of information and communications technology (ICT), for example where a computer is connected to sensors to enable it to collect data and plot graphs, but opportunities are missed to use ICT to its fullest extent. Computer applications, to plot graphs, are not frequently used to enable students to display and compare data in graphs and bar charts. The college is successful in inter-college science competitions and all students in Year 9 take part in a three-day field studies course. These activities bring further interest to the subject and enhance the quality of learning.

123. An experienced specialist leads the subject to a very good standard and the staff work well as a team. All lessons are taught in well-equipped laboratories. The laboratory technicians make a valuable and effective contribution to the smooth running of the department and consequently to the quality of learning.

ART AND DESIGN

124. Standards in art are average at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were above the national average, with 89 per cent of students reaching the expected levels. However, there were considerably more girls than boys in this cohort and, with girls achieving better than boys in art, assessments for this year were higher than previous years, and higher than the standards observed in Year 9 during the inspection. There has been a rising trend in

Key Stage 3 assessment results over the last three years. The GCSE results in 2000 at grades A*- C were broadly in line with the national average. Since 1996, the GCSE results have been improving steadily until 2000, when they dipped from a previous high. All students gained at least a grade G. These results are in line with standards observed during the inspection. In the sixth form, numbers taking A-level examination courses are very small and national comparisons are not valid. In 2000, one student achieved a grade D at A-level and another achieved a distinction in GNVQ Advanced. Two other students sat AS level; one achieved an A grade, the other an E grade. These results were in line with those predicted and students on advanced level courses largely achieve their potential. Results have been of a similar standard over the last few years, and are similar to the standards observed during the inspection.

125. Students' achievements are satisfactory in both key stages and in the sixth form, given their prior attainment, although many students achieve well, producing work of a high quality in a range of media. Girls do better than boys and some boys underachieve during both key stages. Standards of painting and drawing are consistently high, reflecting the department's emphasis on the teaching of basic drawing and observational skills, and of some effective teaching in which careful attention to detail is given. Most students have a good understanding of tone, form and proportion, and their work demonstrates increasing control and depth of understanding as they progress through the course. Some project work in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is well researched and ideas are integrated and modified in imaginative ways. Sketchbooks are used effectively, particularly in Key Stage 3, and students are taught from the beginning how to research visual ideas, and then to select, review and modify them to produce final pieces. However, critical study work is only of average standard. Too much work, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is copied directly from other sources with little of the student's own response. Work in other aspects includes ceramics, printmaking, collage and three-dimensional pieces. Overall attainment ranges widely, but most students are reaching average standards.

126. Throughout the college, girls tend to achieve higher standards than boys. This is largely the consequence of less mature attitudes shown by boys. In Key Stage 3, this manifests itself in some silly behaviour in lessons, while in Key Stage 4, boys are often less well-motivated and slower to settle to work. However, overwhelmingly, students are keen to do well and enjoy working on their projects. Lessons are usually characterised by a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and good in Key Stage 4. Teaching is well managed to ensure that students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. Although the planning of activities is not matched to different abilities, effective teaching ensures that lower attaining students are given more support and that higher attainers are challenged to evaluate and modify their work independently of the teacher. However, sometimes this is not so effectively managed. One Year 9 lesson observed merely expected lower attaining students to achieve less and work more slowly. In practice, they worked more quickly but achieved work that was much less carefully finished. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge and skills. The confident way in which teachers demonstrate by example, and refer students to the work of established artists, prompts further research and a good understanding of context.

128. Homework is used effectively to consolidate learning, by asking students to review what has been achieved in class and by re-visiting technical vocabulary. In another Year 9 lesson, the homework set reinforced the learning effectively by asking students to build on the work they had been doing on self portraits and offering additional challenge by asking students to demonstrate increasing states of anger in their sketches. This is a major improvement since the last inspection when the department was criticised for the lack of opportunity for students to explore how to communicate feeling through art. In general, the quality of interventions in individual student's work by the teacher is high, offering encouragement but also challenge. Where teaching has shortcomings, particularly in Key Stage 3, it is because the pace of learning drops when there is insufficient variety in the teaching methods used. Some opportunities are missed to share good practice and to draw the whole class together to discuss progress.

129. Teaching and learning are more consistently good in Years 10 and 11. This is because expectations are higher and there is greater opportunity for individual support. In addition, students show more commitment and perseverance, as well as having a better understanding of how to improve

their work. Assessment strategies during lessons tend to be informal, encouraging students to review and modify their own work as part of the process. This leads to a good understanding by GCSE students of their progress. Higher attaining GCSE students, as a consequence of effective teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning, make consistently good progress. Some lower attaining students make only satisfactory progress, partly because some boys are less well motivated and partly because when taught in a single lesson, there is insufficient time for sustained progress. In the sixth form, teaching effectively responds to the needs of individuals, and students in Year 13 demonstrate good levels of independence and responsibility for their own learning. However, the lack of opportunity for discussion and sharing of ideas limit learning in the small teaching groups.

130. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. However the subject has suffered from some instability amongst the staff and subject leader in particular since then. Although management of the subject is satisfactory overall, the current subject leader works in an acting capacity. This does not encourage longer term planning or enable the department to establish systematic and regular procedures for monitoring and evaluating its work. However, the subject leader has worked conscientiously to move the subject forward. Development plans are appropriate and the limited opportunities to use computers to support learning are being addressed. Statutory requirements are being met. The subject makes a good contribution to the students' social and cultural development. The curriculum is planned with a strong cultural context, not always Western based. Work on African masks and aboriginal art in particular makes a strong impact on students' awareness of other cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

131. Across the college overall, standards in design and technology are above average, although there are variations between the two key stages. Students' attainment is in line with the standards expected by the age of 14 and is above average by the age of 16. The proportions of students achieving grades A*- C and A*- G in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were broadly in line with the national averages and similar to those obtained by students in most other subjects. There was no significant variation in the attainment of boys and girls. The results in catering were well above average for the third year running. In graphics, the results were above average, although significantly below those in 1999, which were particularly high. The results in textiles were below average, although this was the first year of entrants for some time. Standards remain broadly similar to those found during the last inspection, although there have been considerable variations from year to year in some aspects of the subject, except in catering, where results remain consistently very high, particularly the proportion gaining grades A*- C.

132. By the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is in line with the national expectation, reflecting the National Curriculum assessments undertaken by teachers in 2000. Progress is satisfactory and in a small proportion of lessons, where the impact stems from very good teaching, it is very good. In lessons, students' skills and knowledge are average in designing and making, although the standard of graphical drawing across all areas is below that expected. The presentation of students' work is not high enough. The quality of research, analysis, and the development of ideas are satisfactory, with some very good work evident in catering. Students' good use of tools and equipment is illustrated well in Year 11 projects involving welding, jointing and finishing of resistant materials. There are variations in attainment and progress of different groups of students, for example, those in the early stages of English fluency are not supported well enough in lessons. Most teachers plan easier tasks for students with special learning needs but the gifted and talented are not set sufficiently hard enough tasks and teachers place too much reliance on assessing the end product.

133. By the end of Key Stage 4, students' overall attainment is above average and they make good progress. The range of structured approaches used by each subject enables students to successfully build upon Key Stage 3 work and produce projects in the required areas for the GCSE examinations. The deficiencies in earlier design are corrected by the age of 16 so students are carrying out careful analysis of their designs and results of testing before, and during, the making process. Many have a good understanding of the topics they study. The quality of course work in folders is at least satisfactory, with a high proportion of very good work in catering and a much smaller proportion in resistant materials. Practical work supports a sound knowledge of different processes and care in measuring, marking out, cutting and joining a variety of materials. Most projects show an awareness of efficiency.

134. The quality of design has improved since the last report but much of the graphics is not well presented with regard to accuracy. A contributing factor is the lack of accessibility to up-to-date information communications technology (ICT). Although the department has attempted to rectify this, opportunities in teaching and learning are missed because planning takes insufficient account of how ICT might support the curriculum. Consequently, students do not show a good awareness and understanding of new technologies associated with manufacturing. For example, Year 11 students illustrate their skills in faultfinding and correction of large-scale work, such as the design for a cycle stand and a pedal car, but do not use ICT to improve their projects. Similarly, in production batch baking, students fail in the accuracy required for quality assurance because of inaccurate weighing equipment.

135. Students have good attitudes to work. They concentrate for long periods of time and are well motivated. They are especially keen to carry out practical tasks and work enthusiastically on their projects. Behaviour is good in lessons. Relationships between students and with adults are consistently good and they usually cooperate well with others as appropriate. At Key Stage 3, a small proportion of boys show little sense of urgency in their attitudes and distract others in the class.

136. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall. At times, the quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding and students are generally well managed. The good teaching is having a positive impact on raising standards and improving students' progress, including those with special educational needs. Assessment data are not well analysed and evaluated to help teachers plan the next stage of learning and to correct identified weaknesses. The department's assessment routine is not well known to students so they do not have regular up-to-date information on how they are doing and make comparisons with their peers. In a small number of lessons the teaching is unsatisfactory, partly because the teacher accepts work of a low standard or the work set is too easy, resulting in behaviour problems and lost teaching time.

137. There is an inconsistent approach to teaching the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. On occasions, the application of number and shape are well promoted by the teacher, as in a Year 9 lesson when assembling a three-dimensional box from a net diagram and identifying the critical factors required, including fitting the flap of the lid. Homework is usually set and teachers' marking is generally helpful in showing students what to do next.

138. Not all students are taught design and technology at Key Stage 4 and consequently the college does not fulfil its statutory responsibility. The curriculum is balanced but lacks breadth, as there are insufficient opportunities for pneumatics, alternative energy, robotics and automation, and a loss of a course in the sixth form. The amount of time allocated to Key Stage 4 is also below that recommended, making it difficult to fulfil adequately all elements of the course. Staffing is adequate but the recruitment and retention of full time staff is a continuing problem. Staff are positive in their approach to teaching and committed to improvement, although the monitoring of teaching and learning is too informal.

139. Resources are adequate but there is a shortfall in all subject areas of books, materials and equipment, particularly in textiles, where the few resources are very old and outdated. The accommodation is satisfactory but in need of refurbishment. The leadership has developed the department satisfactorily and the time is now appropriate for a whole-college review of the place and importance of the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

140. Standards in geography are in line with the standards expected nationally by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. The proportion of students achieving grades A*- C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was slightly above the national average. Compared with their other subjects, students made better progress in this subject than in many other subjects. In the A-level examinations in 2000, the results were in line with the national average, although the numbers entered for the examinations were too small to make national comparisons very meaningful. The A-level results have remained consistent over the past four years, with all students achieving grades A-E although with some

variation from year-to-year in the proportions gaining the higher grades. There were no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

141. By the age of 14, standards are in line with the level expected nationally and some students are achieving higher than expected standards. They make good progress through the key stage. Students use basic skills in geography well in retrieving information from atlases, maps and plans. For example, in Year 7 they draw plans of the college grounds and carry out investigations of the distribution of litter. They know that maps are essential in the study of geography and are able to give six figure grid references accurately for a specific location. They use their knowledge of latitude and longitude effectively to plot the location of volcanoes and to draw conclusions about the distributions in relation to tectonic plates. They use their skills of enquiry effectively when they gather evidence of farming activity on a visit to a farm. They appreciate the need to reconcile human activities with the environment in their study of the equatorial rainforest of Brazil, establish the links between vegetation and climate, and gain first hand knowledge of a tropical environment on a visit to Kew Gardens. They use appropriate vocabulary correctly when studying physical features, including rivers and make good use of the local River Blackwater to perform experiments on the rate of discharge and the process of erosion. They extend their knowledge of human response to natural hazards, including volcanic explosions and earthquakes, and keep abreast of current affairs in their study of the recent earthquake in the Gujarat area of India.

142. Students in Key Stage 4 build on the good foundation laid in Key Stage 3 and by the end of Year 11 they have a good grasp of the complex relationship between the natural environment and human activity. For example, they apply cost benefit analysis to the problem of urban renewal and the inequalities in service provision and access. They understand that the process of urbanisation and counter urbanisation are exhibited in varied patterns of migration to and from urban areas. They successfully apply relevant skills to investigate urban land use, the Central Business District, the Green Belt and New Towns. In their sample studies, they analyse the contrasts between the developed world and the developing world, comparing Cardiff with Dhaka and attempt to formulate reasons for the differences in economic development. Throughout their courses, students make good use of information technology to enhance their understanding of the subject, for example, in obtaining additional information about places from the Internet and in analysing and presenting data. By the end of Year 13, students make studies of relevance to the world of work, such as investigating the effect of the location of a superstore on the local community. They study the process of environmental management in their analysis of developments in the Camargue, paying particular attention to the need for a balanced ecosystem. They gain experience in planning investigations and analysing statistics when examining urban change in Manchester and Mexico City and offering ideas for regeneration.

143. Students are well motivated and make good efforts to achieve the high standards expected of them. They are generally enthusiastic and co-operative in completing their assignments, including homework, which they will seek to do even if absent on the day it is given. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have acquired a good foundation of geographical ideas and applications and this enables them to make good progress toward the standards achieved by the end of Year 13. Students with special educational needs make good progress in withdrawal classes and receive additional support in their geography lessons, which contributes to the good progress overall. From the work seen, there is no significant difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls.

144. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some examples of very good teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Where teaching is good or better teachers use their good subject knowledge to ensure that students receive accurate information, obtain clear understanding of the principles involved and acquire new skills in dealing with geographical studies. The teaching of basic skills is good and students recognise the need for accurate use of scales, a key and other features of map work. This enables students to interpret distributions by plotting locations accurately and drawing conclusions based on their observations. Good teaching in the department is also characterised by enthusiastic delivery which stimulates the interest of the students and motivates them to make good intellectual efforts to solve problems. The planning of the work is of a high standard so that the students and students know exactly what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. A variety of strategies is employed which holds the attention and interest of the students throughout the lessons. The management of students is a strength of the department and the relationship between

staff and students is very good. This good relationship, including a sense of humour, is conducive to effective learning and students generally work at a good pace and waste no time at all. Homework is well used in the department to reinforce learning.

145. Leadership and management in the department are good and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject, by staff and students alike, and this contributes to a good learning environment for the subject, enhanced by colourful displays reflecting the range of topics studied. There are good systems in place for planning and for assessment and recording of students' achievements. The documentation in the department is of a very high standard. Good use is made of resources, which are augmented by the personal efforts of the staff. The curriculum is broad and balanced with some extra-curricular opportunities offered including day fieldwork. Resources are satisfactory overall with adequate provision of maps, textbooks and audio-visual aids. The accommodation is not wholly suitable, as teaching and learning are impaired on a daily basis by movements through the classroom. Monitoring of the work of the department, which is good, takes place in the form of planning and discussions between staff and the observation of lessons followed by appropriate feedback.

146. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Good standards have been maintained in the results at GCSE and A-level examinations; strategies have been developed for supporting the more able students; schemes of work have been updated to satisfy the requirements of Curriculum 2000; the use of ICT has been significantly extended; assessment procedures have been developed and refined; subject-specific individual education plans have been introduced for students with special educational needs; and a marking policy has been consistently applied. However, there are areas for improvement remaining, including the provision of opportunities for extended fieldwork; improving the learning environment by reducing the level of noise and disturbance due to traffic through classrooms during lessons and disturbance from the activities of other classes resulting from the open plan; and providing satisfactory blackout to enable the effective use of visual aids.

HISTORY

147. Standards in history are average overall, with above average attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 and average standards by the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In 2000, the proportion of students gaining grades A*- C in the GCSE examinations was, at 57 per cent, in line with the national average. These results represent a decline from the 69 per cent of students who gained grades A*- C in 1999, but were broadly similar to the results in 1998. The performance of the girls in 2000 was markedly better than that of the boys. Students taught in groups setted according to their levels of attainment attained a higher proportion of grades A*- C than those taught in mixed ability classes. The numbers entered for the A-level examinations in 2000 were too small to make comparisons with the national figure meaningful. Of the two students entered for the examinations, one gained a grade A and one a grade B.

148. From the evidence of their current work and teachers' assessments, most students' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the standard expected nationally. They are making good progress and are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. The department is aware that achievement in history is adversely affected by the students' weak literacy skills. The consequent emphasis on literacy is a strength of the department. Teachers insist on correct sentence structure. Lists of historical terms are posted in all history rooms. Students are introduced to new words in almost every lesson so that their vocabulary is constantly extended. Higher attaining students write fluently and grammatically. Lower achieving students benefit from the use of writing frames. Boys are encouraged by being given short snappy exercises, for example, correcting an account which is full of deliberate mistakes, which enable them to succeed. Historical skills are being acquired or further developed. Students are introduced early to original sources and historical controversy. They quickly learn to recognise bias. A lower attaining Year 8 group effectively used contradictory seventeenth century accounts to decide whether Oliver Cromwell was a hero or a villain. Higher attaining students in Year 9, studying the Dunkirk evacuation, compare English and German accounts and assess the reliability of each source before coming to a conclusion. Lower attaining students compare a German film with an English newspaper article. Both groups understand propaganda and the need for each side to keep up civilian morale.

149. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly similar to the national expectation, with students making satisfactory progress throughout the key stage. In a Year 11 revision class, lower attaining students, studying the history of medicine, construct time lines which make clear links between the various discoveries and developments. Higher attaining students in Year 11, revising the Weimar republic, select the relevant information to answer specific essay questions and explain their reasons for doing so. Students take a full part in lessons and answer questions readily but other than in the sixth form, do not often initiate class discussion. The boys are not achieving as well as the girls, especially in their written work.

150. Standards in the sixth form are in line with course requirements. Students in Year 13, giving presentations to assign blame for the Second World War to the various countries involved, are confident in their knowledge and mature in argument. They demonstrate good analytical skills and a keen appreciation of the European situation in the 1930s. Students with special educational needs use carefully selected materials and achieve at an equivalent rate.

151. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Greater emphasis is placed on historical understanding rather than the simple acquisition of facts. Teaching at all levels is rigorous. The use of original source material is very good. The good progress made by students is the result of good teaching. The teaching is good overall, with some examples of very good teaching in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Confident, energetic teaching ensures that students are fully involved in lessons, holds their attention and sustains their concentration. Students feel secure. They know what is expected of them and are enabled to learn quickly, effectively and with enjoyment. The teacher provides a secure framework for a topic, but the information to fill it out is drawn from the class by patient questioning. The reinforcement of learning is good and students acquire good study habits. Teachers' expectations are high and questions are often challenging. The use of original sources is good. In a Year 8 assessment exercise on King John, students were presented with contemporary opinions and accounts, for example Matthew Paris, and asked to assess the reliability of each one. The material was slightly adjusted to meet the needs of lower attaining students.

152. Vivid and imaginative teaching makes a strong impression on younger students and ensures their concentration, as when a Year 7 class on the Black Death began with a 'body' on the front desk and a 'black rat' pinned to the board. The planning and timing of lessons are good. The management of classes is a strength of the department. Teaching methods vary according to the composition of classes so that potentially restless groups are kept on task. Learning is made relevant. In a Year 10 lesson on the problems of the Weimar republic, the teacher made numerous references to problems faced by present day governments. At times, teachers try to get too much into a lesson and some students are left behind. Occasionally, an activity goes on too long so that students lose concentration. Homework is used to support classwork but is not always set.

153. Relationships between students and with the teachers are very good. Courtesy and good humour are evident. Students work co-operatively. Sixth formers in particular are prepared to divide work and share information. The pace in sixth form classes is fast and stimulating and the approach academic. Sixth formers appreciate being treated as intellectual equals. The departmental policy for students with special educational needs is good. Source materials are carefully adapted so that students are able to use them effectively and these students make progress in line with their peers. Higher attaining students make very good progress and in setted classes are given suitably challenging work.

154. The department is well managed and efficiently led. Teachers work as a team and share good practice and good source material, often obtained from the Internet. Teaching is monitored by the subject leader and by a member of the senior management team. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It provides opportunity for students to gain an appreciation of other cultures, for example, North American Indians, and to consider moral issues in their study of Nazi Germany. Their experience is widened by visits to the Somme and to Italy. They learn tolerance as they begin to realise that there are at least two sides to every question. Assessments are used to set targets and to move students between sets. The Target Wall, used in Years 7, 8 and 9, ensures that students understand both their aims and their achievements. The department does not make full use of their assessment procedures. The careful setting of students has had a positive effect on GCSE results. In Year 10 a set has been

created for a group of borderline candidates with the aim of giving them specific help. Access to ICT is restricted and the word processing of coursework, which is very well produced, is undertaken on home computers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

155. By the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is in line with the standard expected nationally, although there are signs of improving standards as attempts are made to link the theory to practice more effectively and engage the students in self-assessment and target setting. Students are making mostly good progress in lessons through engaging in a variety of tasks that enable them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject, although their progress over time is less assured because of the lower than average amount of time allocated to the subject. Further gains can be expected as they become more autonomous learners and also when the benefits from having a fortnightly double lesson in Year 9 feed in, which in itself is not without drawbacks as students were observed struggling to recall work done three weeks previously because of the intervening college holidays. The higher attaining students are not challenged sufficiently or pushed hard enough because of the time taken to provide introductions, explanations and help to the lower attaining pupils. The lower attainers make too many demands and seek help too readily from the teacher.

156. By the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is below the standard expected. A short GCSE course was introduced in 1998 for Year 10 students and the results for the past two years have been slightly below the national average. The teaching and learning is satisfactory but ICT provision in Year 11 remains unsatisfactory and will remain so until all subject departments make their agreed contribution to teach aspects of the programme of study. Standards are lower than expected because the examination is taken a year early, and insufficient time is allocated for the subject as the cross-curricular provision is patchy and not developed in all subjects. In the sixth form, students' achievements are at an appropriate level when account is taken of their earlier attainment

157. There is much enthusiasm shown by students for ICT as a taught subject and as an extra-curricular activity, both in and out of college. The college has a website, maintained voluntarily by students. The students respond well, being calm, co-operative and courteous for most of the time, with the patience of the higher attainers being particularly notable.

158. The teaching is good overall, with an equal measure of satisfactory, good and very good teaching across the key stages. The department has been prepared to take risks in an attempt to find what works best, whilst adopting revised schemes of work and assessment arrangements. Teachers are fewer in number in the department and are now better matched in that they are knowledgeable and well prepared for their lessons. Homework is systematically built into their planning, as are the needs of students with special educational needs. However, insufficient focus is placed on the needs of students learning English as an additional language to enable them to make adequate gains in their learning and their subsequent achievements.

159. Business studies, music and geography, in particular make good use of ICT in the teaching of their subjects, helping to promote, reinforce and develop students' skills further. Whilst some departments are extending their use of ICT, like the use of word-processing and scanning of photographs to enhance biographical work in English, the use by other subjects is minimal. The hardware is insufficient in quantity, quality and reliability to promote opportunity or confidence in their use by other departments. Whilst the college has improved from its former position, the resources have not kept pace with the rapid growth in the size of the college or developments in modern technology.

160. The sixth form students show an excellent attitude towards adults and one another. They provide a good stimulus for each other that is leading to the development of more independent learning skills. The students show confidence in their knowledge, understanding and use of ICT skills they have previously developed.

161. Since the last inspection, the most significant development has been the appointment of a new ICT co-ordinator who has worked with much energy, enthusiasm and commitment to rewrite schemes of

work that better match the programmes of study required and to identify contributions that should be made by other departments to augment and enrich the ICT experiences of students. An ICT technician, who was appointed a term earlier, ably assists the co-ordinator. With additions to, refurbishment and relocation of hardware resources, the provision of ICT capability has been taken forward since the last inspection, placing it in a good position to make further progress.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

162. Students' attainment in French by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is above the standard expected nationally but it is below the standard expected in the current Year 12 group. The results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally. Inspection evidence indicates that these assessments were inaccurate, tending to overestimate what students had achieved. The GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, reaching a much higher than average proportion of grades A*- C in 1999, and falling close to the national average in 2000. Girls achieved higher standards than the boys, in line with the national trend. The proportion of students entered for the examination in 2000 was much higher than the national average and students gained higher grades in French than in several of their other subjects. There were no A-level French entries in 2000.

163. When compared to their earlier attainment, students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well at Key Stage 3 and appropriately at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. By the end of Year 9, they attain standards that are above the national expectation for an average 14 year old. Higher attaining students write extended paragraphs about their holidays, using past and present tenses, and analyse the pros and cons of smoking effectively, using the present tense. Lower attaining students identify negative and positive points about the activities they undertake and pick out phrases relating to height, where people live, age, colour of hair and pastimes, from a passage describing people. Attainment in the current Year 11 is above national expectations, higher than the GCSE results in 2000 would indicate. Higher attaining students do best when writing passages in preparation for examinations, using past, present and future tenses with support. They prepare oral presentations well, but are hesitant when conversing in French without written support. Their reading, writing and listening skills are better developed although there is little reading for pleasure and not enough creative writing. Lower attaining students complete writing frames, using a variety of vocabulary, and write postcards in the present tense with some mistakes. Standards in the current sixth form group are below national expectations for this stage of the course. Although writing and reading skills are well developed, students' listening and speaking skills are not good enough to be able to cope with the demands of the course.

164. Teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and, as a result, learning is also satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are slightly better at Key Stage 3 where teachers have high expectations and move students through the learning at a brisk pace. In the best lessons, clear learning objectives and good reviews of previous learning ensure that students make good progress and build steadily on their knowledge and skills. The weaknesses observed were in lessons where teachers had not formed a clear view of what it was they wanted the students to learn and, as a result, many could not succeed and progress. Teaching in Year 11 is not as challenging as in earlier years. Although students cover the requirements of the modular course very well, they are not challenged enough at this stage and do not make the same progress in their final year as in previous years. Too few opportunities are provided for students to develop their skills in using computers at any key stage.

German

165. Standards in German are high overall. Students achieve well at both key stages. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is above national expectations for this stage of a second language course. Students achieve well. They begin learning German by operating almost entirely in the language from the beginning. Higher attaining students use a variety of tenses to talk about their holidays and lower attaining students complete the same work with occasional problems with accuracy.

166. GCSE results in German have fluctuated over the past three years but have remained well above the national averages in each year. Numbers entering for the examination were too small to enable valid comparisons to be made with national data. Boys did as well as girls in 2000, which is against the national trend. From analysis of the work and lessons observed, attainment at Key Stage 4 is similarly high. All four skills of speaking, reading, writing and listening are very well developed. The only weakness, and an area for improvement, is that students are not using German for themselves and are not, therefore, able to cope with unpredictable situations.

167. The teaching in German is good and sometimes very good. In the best lessons, teachers use German extensively, share the aims of the lesson with students, including the National Curriculum levels they are working towards, and use every minute of the lesson to full advantage. They manage classes well. As a result of this good provision, students make good progress in developing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and meet the teachers' clearly defined objectives in every respect. The scheme of work is good and provides a firm basis to support the teaching and learning.

168. The subject leader for modern foreign languages manages the department well and has coped effectively with staffing difficulties over recent years. There is good support for staff encountering problems. Teachers have a shared commitment to raising standards and many are doing so effectively. Since the last inspection, schemes of work, which are good, have been rewritten and there are effective structures in place to ensure progress and continuity in learning. There continues, however, to be too little use of French by students and not enough creative activities are provided to ensure that they become used to dealing with unpredictable language. Although there is some monitoring of teaching and learning, this is an area for further development to ensure that the very good practice of some teachers is acknowledged and replicated by the whole department. As a result of the setting arrangements in French at Key Stage 3, although there is an equal spread of girls and boys in the higher attaining groups, there are many more boys than girls in the lowest sets. There is only one lesson of German in Year 8 for higher ability students, which means that not enough time is provided to ensure the best start in learning the language. Display is good in many rooms and the foreign languages assistant and learning assistants provide effective support in lessons.

MUSIC

169. Standards in music overall are in line with the national expectation, with students attaining above average standards by the end of Key Stage 3. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were fractionally lower than the national average, but were, nevertheless, a significant improvement on the previous year. Work observed during the inspection points to a continuation of that improvement, especially in Years 7 and 8, where many students are now working at a level somewhat higher than expected of their age group.

170. There were no entries for GCSE in 2000, but the preceding year's results were in line with the national average. Current work in Key Stage 4 is mostly at the standard expected for the respective age groups, although some students are already beyond that in Year 10. Targets for future achievement are realistic. There is no music course at present in Years 12 and 13.

171. By the age of 14, students are beginning to develop critical skills when listening and responding to music. Many are able to recognise instrumentation, aspects of structure, dynamics and mood and to comment on these elements, using appropriate musical vocabulary and technical language. Their skills continue to be developed in Key Stage 4, where students listen to and interpret more accurately in basic music analysis and apply this knowledge and understanding to their composing and performing activities. In both key stages, practical skills are being advanced using a range of instruments in a broad variety of musical styles and genres. All year groups are benefiting from access to and use of good quality ICT facilities. Class work is further enhanced by the provision of a programme of instrumental and singing teaching of high quality.

172. The quality of teaching is mostly good and sometimes very good. Teachers' knowledge, interest and enthusiasm are reflected both in class lessons and extra-curricular activities. Lessons feature a broad span of musical styles from different historical periods including much world music. The programme of study is continually under review, taking account of changes to the National Curriculum

and the department's aims to improve teaching. Progress in most lessons is good, with time and tasks planned so that students at all levels can achieve to the best of their ability. There are ample opportunities for students' self-assessment and this, together with more formal assessments within topic areas, is beginning to inform the review of and changes within the music curriculum.

173. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and positive: most obviously enjoy their music lessons. They show respect for adults and support each other during group work, which is often without direct supervision in corridors and practice rooms. Good quality accommodation, instruments and electronic equipment are well cared for. Many students organise themselves into ad hoc music groups in their free time and a wide range of extra-curricular activities is well-supported, affording opportunities for regular performances both in college and in the wider community. The steel band plays a dominant role in this respect.

174. This is a busy department, which is making a useful contribution to the aims of the college. Subject leadership is good and demonstrates a clear direction for the subject, supported by proficient management of accommodation and resources. Improvements since the last inspection include a shift in the weighting of curriculum time in favour of Year 7, a reorganisation of the scheme of work to help improve teaching and learning, and the appointment of a second full-time musician. The consolidation and acceleration of these developments would be enhanced by the provision of a second music room, continuing the promotion of team work and sharing of good ideas and an endeavour to refine the quality of musical activities in terms of the finer details of performance, for example, tuning, stylistic nuance and ensemble.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

175. Students' attainment in physical education overall is in line with the standard expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and above average in the sixth form. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national expectations, due to consistently good teaching and because students have a responsible attitude and approach towards learning. Some students have developed good technique and are able to demonstrate good control of body shapes and tension in gymnastics. In dance, students work creatively in planning short routines. The development of students' knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work cooperatively in pairs and small groups, planning and performing sequences of movements.

176. By the end of Year 11, students' attainment overall is in line with national expectations, although students following the GCSE examination course are attaining higher standards than students undertaking the core physical education lessons, reflecting the results of the GCSE examinations in 2000. The proportion of students achieving grades A*- C in 2000 was well above the national average, showing a considerable improvement over those for 1999 when they were in line with the national average. This difference in attainment levels in Key Stage 4 is due to teachers offering more challenge to examination students through the use of a variety of teaching and learning styles. Standards in the sixth form are above average. No student was entered for the A-level examination in 2000 but the small number of students entered in 1999 all gained pass grades. A significant number of students achieve good standards in extra-curricular activities at local and area levels and this makes a good contribution to the overall standards in physical education.

177. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Participation rates are high and standards of kit are good. Students work well together, in pairs and groups, and show good levels of concentration, even when not directly supervised by the teacher. Behaviour is good. Levels of sporting behaviour are high and good play is appreciated and applauded. A high proportion of students choose to take part in the good programme of extra-curricular activities.

178. The quality of teaching in physical education is good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and use this to plan lessons with good pace and challenge. Participation levels are high. However, in a minority of cases, strategies to involve non-participants in learning are under developed. Teachers relate well with students, giving them confidence to respond to questioning and to perform in front of other students. Clear explanations and demonstrations ensure that students have a sound understanding of lesson tasks. Positive relationships are based on respect and the use of praise for

both effort and achievement. Teachers do not give sufficient opportunities for students to take enough responsibility for their own learning, to observe others' performance and to assess the progress being made against expected outcomes.

179. Subject leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of the department. Subject planning ensures that statutory requirements are being met and that there is appropriate breadth and balance of experience for the students. Good teamwork is a feature of the department. This leads to a consistency of expectation in terms of dress, participation and behaviour. The subject improvement plan is good and is directly linked to improving teaching and learning.

180. All the strengths in the previous report have been sustained. There is now an improvement plan for teaching and learning and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress being made by students. However, no progress has been made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to include some physical activity on their timetable.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

181. Standards by the age of 14 and 16 are broadly in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The results in 2000, for students studying the full GCSE course, were above the national average at grades A* - C. The performance of the girls, who outnumbered the boys in the group by about four to one, was well above the national average. Although remaining above the national averages, the proportion of students gaining grades A* - C has decreased quite considerably since the last inspection. Over the same period, the number of students choosing to enter for the GCSE examination has increased. No students are following a GCSE course this year. In the sixth form, no students were entered for A-level in 2000, but in the previous two years the very small numbers taking the course gained pass grades.

182. In lessons and work seen, students' attainment by the age of 14 is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. By Year 9, most students have increased their knowledge of the traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Higher attaining students show a good understanding of the value Muslims place on religious practices for reinforcing their beliefs. Students' awareness of the differences and similarities between religions is generally weak. They have not acquired an overview of what is distinctive about each religion's visions, values and ideals in order to consider human issues from a religious perspective and engage with religious questions about wider human experience as the basis for exploring their own and others' feelings and values. Their knowledge of Christianity includes the range of practices within Christian groups, without successfully identifying why different interpretations of beliefs and individual responses are possible within all religions. Too few are able to explain the experiences which religions share with other lifestyles and to identify, and then apply, religious principles to the challenging dilemmas and circumstances in which all individuals and communities are involved in the world today. They make good sense of the ideas about the nature and purpose of human existence that the common concerns of religions highlight, through the study of significant individuals and events such as Martin Luther King, and the Holocaust. They do not demonstrate a willingness to ask appropriate and probing questions about religions. In Years 8 and 9, the setting of the subject with modern foreign languages has resulted in a disproportionate number of boys in the lower attaining sets, which is affecting their progress and motivation.

183. As in the last inspection, there is limited evidence on which to make a secure judgement about all students' standards by the end of Key Stage 4, because of the short time they study religions through modules on selected moral issues, but the available evidence indicates that they are broadly in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Students select from a range of viewpoints but some are still at an early stage of understanding the need to identify, and bear in mind, all the possible approaches to moral issues to be confident in weighing up choices in changing circumstances, a skill that should have been developed by the age of 14. In work samples and the one lesson seen, students have insufficient knowledge and understanding of what motivates and guides the different attitudes and behaviour of members of faith communities.

184. A significant number of students at 14 and 16 are underachieving, and this contrasts with the last inspection when achievement was generally above average in relation to their earlier attainment. The lack of focus in all topics on the study in breadth and depth of the relevant religion deprives students of enough opportunities to develop the skills to learn about and from religions today. Students in Year 7 consider features of religious experiences, but they do not explore sufficiently the religions these are part of. In Year 8, much work is at the level of description about Christian events and developments in the past which limits the opportunity for all students to develop the skills necessary for understanding how Christians today relate their teachings to the society in which they live. Students gain some insights into being Christian, Muslim, or Jewish but lower attaining students have insufficient opportunity to learn through exploring artefacts and evidence they can collect, see and touch, in order to experience what religions offer people today. In Year 9, students' view of religion has not developed to take account of the need to understand the role of world religions in influencing the changing lives of populations and cultures in local and world-wide communities. They have not yet developed an understanding in sufficient depth of the opportunities for people to represent religious ideals at all levels of society and how religions play their part in society today through the contributions of leaders, community life and individual responsibility and open debate. Between the ages of 14 and 16, students enjoy the opportunity to develop their own views on moral issues, but many are satisfied once they have made up their own mind, and there is insufficient time for research. Students with special educational needs make the same progress as others.

185. Sufficient curriculum time is provided for religious education at Key Stage 3, although students in Year 9 who study two languages do not have equal opportunity to fulfil the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form as insufficient time is allocated to the subject to meet all the requirements of the agreed syllabus. The proposals that will enable students in Years 10 and 11 to study a GCSE short course will meet statutory requirements and allow more students, particularly boys, to be able to gain a recognised qualification.

186. The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and often good and sometimes very good. There is insufficient evidence on which to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching of students at Key Stage 4. In the one lesson seen, the teaching was very good. The quality of teaching is influenced by how much lessons are seen to build on each other, to link to previous work, and to make use of what students already know and understand. The best teaching moves learning from defining terms to exploring concepts and ideas. The selection of resources raises relevant issues, and planning allows students sufficient time to develop and express their views through responding to open questions and class discussion. Students' questions and answers inform progress, and their willingness to contribute their own views is encouraged and valued. Clear explanations are given of the evidence required from tasks for learning to be successful and these help students to understand how to investigate the resources from the religions being studied. Teaching is effective because students do not depend solely on the teacher for information and understanding. In the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, teacher direction and the pace of learning restricts opportunities for students to develop their skills of working on their responses to religious teachings together in groups. They lack enough opportunity to share investigations and to collaborate and argue the merits of different points of view through debate, oral discussion, feedback, plenary sessions and extended writing. Where students are asked questions about people's choices they are too directed and not encouraged enough to explain and analyse reasons.

187. Since the last inspection teaching is less secure and does not provide adequate prompts or support materials to meet the different needs of students. Assessment is carried out regularly. Marking for most students includes helpful comments. At the end of pieces of work, marking identifies levels of achievement, tells students what they need to be do to improve, and invites their comments. These levels and their expectations also need communicating to students at the start of each topic. The department is making a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of students, without sufficient opportunity for this to be extended in collective worship.

188. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The present subject leader has been appointed recently and in the short time in post has provided clear educational direction for other teachers through example and both formal and informal support. The provision of detailed lesson plans and resources, based on inherited schemes of work, has ensured a consistent approach in

all classes. The schemes of work for Key Stage 3 do not give enough time for students to study each religion, as practised today, in sufficient breadth and depth and complementary units in the locally agreed syllabus are not sufficiently integrated in the schemes of work. There is a useful departmental handbook, which includes action plans that meet the requirements of whole college policies. There are insufficient numbers of textbooks and artefacts to enrich students' learning.

BUSINESS STUDIES

189. Only a small number of lessons in business studies were seen during the inspection. From this evidence and the scrutiny of students' work, students' attainment in business studies by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the standard expected nationally, although many students in Year 11 are attaining higher standards than this. This indicates some improvement over the GCSE results in 2000. The GCSE results over the past three years have fluctuated quite considerably. In 1998, they were broadly average but were well above average in 1999. In 2000, there was a significant drop in performance and the results were well below average and lower than those for other subjects. This drop in performance has been attributed to the 'general turbulence' created with changes in senior management during the year and that students in mixed ability classes performed less well than when setting has been possible. Standards in the sixth form are above average and reflect the students' performance in A-level examinations in recent years. The last entry at A-level, in 1999, produced results above the national average and well above the year before that.

190. Students are making mostly good progress in their learning. Their attitudes to learning are very good and they are polite, cooperative, patient, attentive and responsive. Where learning is most effective, there is greater pace and rigour, and students are quicker to respond to questioning or in performing the set task. In the sixth form, Year 12 students are responsive, engaging well in question and answer sessions and, when having a more detailed discussion, drawing well on their knowledge of subject specific terminology. Their understanding of theory was evident from their rationalisations and decision-making when presented with a number of alternatives. In the smaller Year 13 group of two, the same spark was missing as there were fewer to interact with and the learning was more teacher directed. Whilst the quality of learning would benefit from the opportunity for more autonomous work, the students make very good use of IT and produce coursework of a high standard.

191. The teaching is good overall and frequently very good. Planning is very thorough. The teacher's extensive subject knowledge is used well to inject pace and relevance through the use of an extensive range of questioning that probes, challenges and develops students' knowledge and understanding. Very good use is made of ICT for both teaching and undertaking course work for which some students get maximum marks in the examination.

VOCATIONAL AND OTHER COURSES

192. The college provides a relatively narrow range of vocational courses for students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. These include Part 1 courses in health and social care at Intermediate level and at Foundation and Intermediate levels in leisure and tourism at Key Stage 4, and an Intermediate leisure and tourism course in Year 12. In addition, a group of students are following the two-year CACHE diploma course in child care and education. No lessons in the Intermediate course in health and social care, which has been introduced in Year 10, were observed during the inspection. From the small amount of evidence available in lessons and from the scrutiny of students' work, students in Year 11 following the Foundation and Intermediate courses in leisure and tourism are achieving standards in line with course requirements. Students have passed the examination requirements and are completing course requirements. They are able to research topics on the Internet but are not sufficiently discriminating in the use of sources. They are able to identify the skills requirements of different roles in leisure and tourism opportunities by analysing information. They are generally making satisfactory progress, both in lessons and over time.

193. In the Intermediate leisure and tourism course in Year 12, standards are in line with course requirements, reflecting the final awards made in 2000. In that year, all but one of the small number of students following the course gained a pass award and one achieved a merit. Standards in the CACHE

diploma course are above average, reflecting the results in 2000 and in previous years, when many students gained merits and distinctions. Students are making good progress in developing their knowledge and skills. They have a good understanding of the Children Act and child protection procedures and are able to differentiate between the requirements of children in different settings, including the value of baseline assessments. Students speak confidently about their first-hand experiences of working and supporting children and families under stress.

194. The teaching on the leisure and tourism courses is at least satisfactory and occasionally good. In the best teaching, students receive focused individual guidance and support to help them understand their assignments and how to cross-reference their work with the assignment criteria. The effective use of questioning checks understanding and promotes students' understanding. In other lessons, the impact of the teaching is not so noticeable. The majority of students remain on task but the pace of work can remain too slow at times. Some students have not established clear routines and methodologies for tackling their work and although supportive, the assessment of students' assignments in some lessons is not sufficiently diagnostic. The main weakness in ensuring that students approach their work in a consistent and methodical way is that they are taught by too many teachers. Eight teachers teach the different units and key skills in the Intermediate leisure and tourism course in Year 12.

195. The teaching on the CACHE course is good and sometimes very good. Very good relationships with students and the use of gentle humour create a calm and relaxed atmosphere in which students are able to make good progress. Open-ended questions are used effectively to stimulate students' thinking and to challenge them intellectually. Students use their analytical skills well to assess and relate to the various settings. Students on this course have a very responsible attitude to work and maintain a high level of interest and concentration. They express themselves confidently and work well, both independently and collaboratively, as required.

196. Leadership and management of both the vocational courses and the CACHE course are good. Documentation is thorough and provides helpful guidance to staff on a range of issues. There is insufficient guidance for students in Years 10 and 11 on how to plan, manage and present their work. Procedures for monitoring the work in the vocational courses are developing but need to be more robust and systematic. Resources are improving and are generally satisfactory. There are plans to extend the range of vocational courses available to students.