

INSPECTION REPORT

VALE OF CATMOSE COLLEGE

Oakham

LEA area: Rutland

Unique reference number: 120290

Principal: Peter Green

Reporting inspector: Susan Simper

12970

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 4th February 2000

Inspection number: 187094

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	John Cross
Date of previous inspection:	29/01/96

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Philip Garnham	Team inspector	Science	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The Vale of Catmose College is an 11 to 16 college that admits students of all abilities. There are 665 girls and boys on roll. At 8%, the proportion of students claiming free school meals is below the national average. Very few ethnic minority students attend the college, and only 2 students have English as an additional language. The overall attainment of students on entry is above the national average. 139 students are on the register of special needs, which is slightly above average, and 26 students have statements. The college has enhanced special provision for nine of these students. The college also provides educational opportunities for adult learners.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

The Vale of Catmose College is a good school with many strengths and a positive ethos for learning. The overall effectiveness of the college is good. It is very well led and managed, teaching is good, monitoring and self-review are well established, and the college is well equipped for further improvement. Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good, and their attainment improves as they get older. The college provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- In Key Stage 3 tests in 1999, attainment was above the national average in mathematics and science.
- GCSE results in 1999 were well above average, and students were successful in a wide range of subjects. Standards in art and German were particularly good.
- Students now in the college are achieving above average standards overall at age 14 across the subjects taught. Good progress is made, and standards for students aged 16 are good in most subjects.
- Behaviour is very good. Students have a very positive attitude to the college, and attendance is good.
- Teaching and learning overall are good, and very good teaching is found in almost one in three lessons.
- The college is very well led and managed. Principles of best value are applied very well.
- Monitoring and evaluation of standards of teaching and learning are very well developed and are effective.
- Very good assessment procedures and systems for academic monitoring of students.
- Very good provision made for students' social development, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided.

What could be improved

- A lower percentage of students reached Level 6 in national tests in 1999 in English, mathematics, and science than found in schools with a similar intake. Talented and gifted students are not challenged enough.
- The curriculum provided for students age 11-16 does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- Attainment is below average in design and technology and information technology in both key stages.
- Students do not meet the standards set by the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education by age 16.
- There is some good teaching in science, but overall teaching, learning and management are unsatisfactory.
- Girls achieve at comparatively lower levels than boys in science.
- Provision made for spiritual development is unsatisfactory, and students are not well prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.
- Reports to parents do not always report as fully on progress in subjects as required.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in January 1996, attainment has risen moderately in Key Stage 3 and very markedly in GCSE examinations. Teaching and learning have improved. Progress in response to issues identified in the last report has been mainly satisfactory and, in improving monitoring, very good. In improving provision for information technology for all students and for religious education in Key Stage 4, progress has been unsatisfactory. Reports to parents have been improved, but still do not give enough information on progress. The statutory requirement for a daily act of worship for all students is still not met.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in end of Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 Tests	A	B	B	E
GCSE examinations	N/A	C	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Similar schools are defined as those with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals

In Key Stage 3 tests in 1999, attainment in English was in line with national averages and in mathematics and science it was above. A lower proportion of students reached the higher Level 6 standard than found in similar schools. The results at the Vale of Catmose were broadly in line with other Rutland schools. College results have broadly followed the national trends over the past three years, although within individual subjects there have been fluctuations.

In GCSE examinations in 1999, a much higher proportion of students gained five or more GCSE grades A*-C and A*-G grades than found nationally, or was found in similar schools. Standards were especially high in art and German. They were well above average in English, mathematics, science, and physical education, and above average in history and French. They were below average in design and technology, drama and religious education.

Targets set by the college in 1999 were exceeded. Targets set for 2000 are lower, but appropriate and sufficiently challenging based on the excellent assessment information kept by the college.

Students now in Year 9 achieve well above average standards in art, and are above average in English, mathematics, history and music. They are below average in design and technology and information technology as students do not spend enough time on these subjects. In Year 11, students' achievement is particularly good in art as standards achieved are well above average yet all students study the subject. Achievement is above average in English, mathematics, history, German, and music. Achievement is below average in design and technology because students have not acquired skills in the past, and information technology and religious education because they do not have enough lessons in these subjects. In science, girls achieve less well than boys. Students with special educational needs make good progress against their targets.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Very positive attitudes with students eager to learn and succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Consistently very good. No evidence of any bullying or lack of respect for property.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships established. Students very cooperative, showing tolerance and regard for others. Accept responsibility well.
Attendance	Good, but punctuality at start of day and between lessons a problem.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Good	Good	Good	N/A

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.

During the inspection, 157 lessons were observed and all teachers seen.

Teaching is at least satisfactory or better in 92% of lessons. In 62% of lessons teaching is good or better, and in 30% of lessons very good or better. In 8% of lessons, teaching is excellent. Unsatisfactory teaching is found in 8% of lessons of which 3% are poor.

Where teaching is of good or better quality, students learn well and make good progress. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, students do not learn enough. Teaching and learning are very good in English, and good in mathematics. In science, although some good lessons are taught, teaching overall is unsatisfactory because too many lessons have weaknesses so students do not learn. Teaching is particularly good in art, geography, history, German and music. It is good in modern foreign languages and information technology. In all other subjects it is satisfactory. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, but is not as well developed as that of literacy which, as a whole college priority, is well taught. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good. Students who are gifted and talented have not been sufficiently challenged, especially in English, mathematics and science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Absence of curriculum policy is unhelpful. Broad range in both key stages, but not fully meeting statutory requirements. Very good extra-curricular provision including a good range of sports.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good provision made for students with a wider range of special needs than usually found. Good support for students for whom additional provision made. Speech therapy requirements not met.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The two students with English as an additional language are given very good support to enable them to gain fullest possible integration into the full curriculum.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Programme for personal and social education is under review and needs improving. Provision is good for moral development and very good for social development. Provision for cultural development is good, except in preparing students for life in culturally diverse society. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the college cares for its students	Satisfactory provision. Very good assessment procedures and excellent academic monitoring. Pastoral monitoring less well developed. Special needs students well cared for. Good procedures to promote and monitor attendance and good behaviour. Health and safety procedures sound, but risk assessments not completed. A few issues to address notified to the college.

The partnerships established between parents and the college are sound.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Principal is an excellent leader, and senior management is of very high quality. Good subject management, including special needs provision, except in science. Pastoral management structures less clearly defined.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very active, committed and well informed governing body. Have clear view about direction for college, and effective in monitoring work of college and holding college to account. Weaker in ensuring all statutory requirements met.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Excellent data enables college to very effectively monitor and evaluate performance. Development planning has clear focus on raising standards. Very good monitoring of teaching and learning, and use of appraisal.
The strategic use of resources	Financial resources made available to the college are managed effectively and efficiently. Sufficient teachers, but too few technical staff. Library is well used but has too few books.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think their children make good progress. • Behaviour of the students is good in the college and around the town. • Teaching is good and teachers work hard to help their children. • They feel comfortable in approaching the college. • The college expects their children to work hard. • The college is well led and managed. • The college helps their children to become mature and responsible. • Standards in the college are rising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The homework timetable because it is not helpful to their children. • Better use of the homework diary as a home/college communicator. The amount of homework given. Better quality homework in some subjects. • More consistent teaching and marking of work in science. • Better information about the progress made by their children. • Better arrangements for parents' evenings. • More challenge for the most able students.

The great majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire, and who attended the parents' meeting, expressed positive support for the work of the college. They are pleased with the quality of education their children receive. Where parents have concerns, the inspection findings are as follows. The homework timetable is unhelpful but, during the week of the inspection, homework diaries were completed and homework set in lessons was found to be satisfactory. In other concerns, the inspection confirms the views of parents. Teaching and marking of work in science are inconsistent. Reports to parents do not provide enough information about the progress made in subjects. Parents' meetings could be improved, and

there remains scope for greater challenge for talented and gifted students. The positive views expressed by the parents about the college are supported by the inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

Attainment on entry

- 1 Students' standards of attainment on entry to the college in 1999 based on Key Stage 2 national tests were above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, when compared to similar schools, attainment on entry is below the average. In the current Year 7, local authority data shows that attainment in English of students entering the Vale of Catmose College was lower than for those entering other Rutland secondary schools. In mathematics, more students attained higher levels, and in science about the same proportion reached higher levels, as in the other secondary schools. However, collectively in all three subjects, there was a higher proportion of students with below average attainment entering this college than the other Rutland schools. This is reflected in the additional provision made by the college for special educational needs students. Data maintained by the college shows fluctuations between year groups in relation to students' attainment on entry, but in all year groups it is at least average or above overall.

Performance in the most recent tests and examinations

- 2 In 1999, attainment at age 14 in national tests was above the national average when all core subjects are considered together. Attainment in English was in line with the national average, and attainment was above the national average in mathematics and science. The attainment of boys and girls was similar to the national pattern in English with girls attaining higher levels overall than boys. In mathematics, boys attained well above the average for boys nationally. While girls also achieved standards above those found for girls nationally, they were not quite as good as the boys. In science, boys achieved well above the national average for boys, but while girls attained above the national average, there was a wide difference between boys and girls with considerably lower performance by girls.
- 3 At age 16, students' attainment in GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above average. 64% of students attained five or more passes at the higher A*-C grades, and 97% of students gained five or more passes at A*-G level. The percentage of students gaining one or more GCSE passes at 98% was average. When average points scores are compared, both boys and girls at the college achieved levels well above the national average, and the boys did particularly well. Attainment was very high in art with a very much higher proportion than usually found of students taking the examination and being successful. Attainment in German was also very high. Attainment was well above average standards in English, mathematics, science, music and physical education, and above average in history and French. It was average in geography, and below average in design and technology, drama, information technology and religious education. However, in religious education, many of the students who took the examination were students with lower attainment overall, and their results in religious education were in line with the other subjects they studied.

Attainment compared with similar schools

- 4 Against national benchmarks of students reaching Levels 5 and 6 in similar schools,

in 1999 attainment in English and mathematics was judged well below average, and science was in line. Overall attainment is well below that of similar schools. These comparisons do not take into account the rising number of special educational needs students, but do indicate that there is scope for improved performance at the higher levels. The levels attained by the college are broadly in line with other Rutland schools.

- 5 By age 16, when compared to the national benchmarks of the number and level of passes in GCSE examinations, the college compares very favourably with results well above those of similar schools in the proportion of students passing at both 5 A*-C levels and 5 A*-G levels.

Trends in results over time

- 6 Over the past three years, the trend in the attainment of students age 14, based on all of the core subjects, was broadly in line with the national trend. However, within the college the pattern of fluctuations within individual core subjects has been markedly different, especially in English where attainment has swung from above to below average.
- 7 In 1996, for students age 14, attainment in national tests was average overall, but below average in English. These students took their GCSE examinations in 1998 when results in the college were also below average. In 1997 attainment at age 14 was above average in all core subjects. These students took their GCSE examinations last year. They made good progress and achieved well above average examination results. In 1998 attainment fell in all core subjects, most markedly in English where it fell to below average. These students are now in Year 11. These fluctuations reflect marked differences in the attainment levels of different year groups as they pass through the college as well as different patterns of attainment between the core subjects.

Attainment in other subjects

- 8 In end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in non-core subjects in 1999, attainment in art and music were well above expectations. In most other subjects they were broadly in line with expectations, except in geography where they were slightly below, and design and technology where they were well below. These assessments are not moderated at a national level, but for most subjects they accurately reflect the findings of the inspection in respect of standards found now. Only in the assessment of information technology is there a marked difference, where the inspection finds lower standards now than the college's own assessments last year.

Targets set by the college

- 9 Targets set for GCSE performance in 1999 were exceeded. Appropriate targets for 2000 have been set by the college and agreed with the local authority. Although the targets set for GCSE are lower than those attained last year, these are realistic and appropriately challenging based on the assessment data held by the college on the current Year 11. Within the college, appropriate targets are being agreed for subjects based on excellent information about individual students. This information is also used in most subjects as a basis for individual performance reviews with students, and to set short and longer term targets for improvement. Very good progress is being made towards meeting college, subject, and individual targets other than in

some science groups where available data is used inconsistently.

Achievement by students currently in the college

- 10 In **English**, students enter the college with above average standards, but a significant minority has problems with basic literacy. Good progress is made, and students improve their reading and writing skills well. They are increasingly able to write extended pieces with confidence and accuracy, and understand the meaning of written text. Speaking and listening develop well, especially through the use of drama and, by age 14, above average standards are achieved. Good progress is maintained, and students by age 16 achieve standards above those expected for GCSE examinations in both the use of language and the study of literature.
- 11 Students enter the college with above average attainment in **mathematics**. They make good progress and, by age 14, achieve above average standards. Students are able to manipulate fractions and decimals and compute equivalences. Many are able to use the probability scale, and determine the variation in chance in different games. By age 16, mathematical skills and knowledge improve considerably, especially for middle and high attaining students. Graph work is very well developed, and many students are good at solving equations.
- 12 In **science** students enter the college with above average attainment. Sound progress is made and, by age 14, students achieve standards at least in line with national expectations, and some students achieve better standards. Their knowledge and understanding of science are sound, and their practical skills are reasonably well developed, but some students lack confidence. By age 16, students achieve standards at least in line with those expected and can explain key scientific concepts. However, at all ages, higher levels of attainment are not reached often enough as students have limited breadth of understanding of scientific concepts. The progress they make in the subject varies in response to the quality of teaching they receive.
- 13 In **art**, by age 14, the majority of students are working at levels much higher than expected for their age across a wide range of art media. They use their sketchbooks well. Good progress continues to be made and, by age 16, students demonstrate very well developed making skills in their optional choices of drawing, painting, ceramics and textiles. Students' ability to make connections with the work of other artists is more variable.
- 14 Standards of achievement in **design and technology** are currently below average at both ages 14 and 16. Students have not acquired the skills needed for success in this subject. Recent staff changes and better teaching in most lessons are leading to improvements, and sound progress is now being made in the development of basic skills, knowledge and understanding of food, graphics, resistant materials, systems and control.
- 15 In **geography**, by age 14, students achieve average standards. They have sound knowledge of locations, and acquire technical vocabulary. They show good understanding of geographical patterns, and can gather information from field observations, texts and surveys. Sound progress is made and, by age 16, attainment is average. Students show sound understanding of geographical processes, and good location knowledge.
- 16 In **history**, students achieve standards which are above average by age 14. They acquire good knowledge and understanding of events, people and situations. Written

work is a major strength. Good progress continues and, by age 16, achievement remains above average. Students develop good independent learning skills in their research work and, in discussions, are able to offer good information and argument.

- 17 In **information technology** lessons, students by age 14 achieve well, but inconsistent coverage of required areas within other subjects means that overall achievement is below average. Students in Key Stage 4 have very limited access to information technology through subjects and their achievement overall is below average. Students studying for GCSE make better progress, and achieve average standards.
- 18 In **modern foreign languages**, all students study one language, and some study two. In both **French** and **German**, students aged 14 achieve average standards. They can write about familiar topics, have a good grasp of grammar, and pronounce words well. By age 16, students studying French achieve sound standards, but those studying German are above average. Students are able to use original and complex language, particularly in German.
- 19 By age 14, students achieve above average standards in **music**. They have a good understanding of musical concepts such as scales, modes and chords. Performance skills are good. By age 16, most students opting to continue music achieve well against national expectations. They have very good performance skills, and can compose imaginatively in a range of styles.
- 20 In **physical education**, by age 14, planning, performing and evaluating skills are in line with national expectations, with several students achieving high standards in football and swimming. In dance and badminton, achievement is below average. By age 16, achievement in the lessons provided for all students is average, but with higher than average attainment by several students in basketball and netball. For students studying GCSE physical education, standards are in line with expectations for this stage of the course.
- 21 In **religious education**, students achieve standards that are in line with the expectations of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. Students have sound knowledge of the religions they study. Although all students are taught a small amount of religious education in Key Stage 4, this is insufficient to meet requirements, and standards are well below those expected. Students studying for GCSE religious education make sound progress and achieve satisfactory standards. They have sound knowledge and understanding about Islam, and similarities and differences between worship by different Christian denominations.
- 22 The college caters for a wide range of **special educational needs**. Some students have additional special provision made for them because of the very specific nature of their needs. These students make good progress. By age 14, most are able to read with fluency, and writing, speaking and listening improve. By age 16, most students gain at least one A*-G pass grade at GCSE. Students with identified emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress during their time at the college. The targets they are set are appropriate and challenging. Other students with special educational needs make good progress, and this good progress is maintained even in lessons where no specific additional staff support is provided.
- 23 The provision made for the two students who have **English as an additional language** is good, and these students make progress in line with other students.

- 24 Standards of **literacy** improve as the students move through the college. Literacy is a college target, and it is well developed in English, drama, art, history, modern foreign languages, science, mathematics and information technology. Speaking and listening skills are strengths, especially when used in English, drama, history, modern foreign languages, science, mathematics and religious education. Good listening skills are often demonstrated when other students present work to the class. Reading development is sound overall in most subjects, although at times it is limited by the lack of opportunities to retrieve and synthesise meaning from text. Reading competency is secured for all students including those with special educational needs and lower attainers. Writing standards are more variable across the curriculum. In most subjects written work shows an at least satisfactory standard of accuracy, with students able to write appropriately in an extended form. Where students are asked to write structured prose they can do it well in English, history and information technology lessons, but it is done less well in design and technology.
- 25 Standards of **numeracy** across the college are good and numeracy is strongly promoted in mathematics. In design and technology, spreadsheets and graphs are used effectively to present results of questionnaires and, in geography, students use graphs of many types effectively to explain their work. In science, students are less confident at predicting outcomes from graphical data than in producing the graphs themselves.

Summary

- 26 College data show variations in attainment in different year groups when they started at the college. By age 14, attainment in national tests is above average, but well below that of similar schools. By age 16, attainment in GCSE is well above average, and students are well equipped to move on to the next phase of education. Students with special educational needs make good progress and the great majority is successful in GCSE examinations. The progress students make as they move through the college, shown in the individual tracking of students through assessment data, is better for most than might be expected. Value is added, so the majority achieves above average standards. Last year the clear focus given to raising attainment in GCSE was very successful. However, whilst overall attainment for most students improves to levels which are at least average and often above average, too few students are reaching the very highest levels, especially in Key Stage 3 tests. Although overall GCSE results are well above average, within individual subjects there remains scope for still higher performance by talented and gifted students, and improved attainment by girls especially in science and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics and geography.

Parents' views

- 27 Of the parents who responded to the questionnaire, 96% believe their children make good progress at the college. At the meeting for parents, the parents present expressed strong beliefs that the college has moved forward in improving standards and in providing greater challenge for students. They identified particularly high standards of expectation in mathematics, German and music, but more variable standards between individual teachers in science. Most parents felt that the most able students were not fully extended in all subjects. The inspection supports the

views of parents in all of these aspects.

Progress since the previous report

- 28 Attainment in end of Key Stage 3 tests at age 14 has risen in all core subjects and followed the national trend, remaining mainly above average, except in English where there have been larger fluctuations. Achievement in other subjects has remained similar. Achievement in information technology remains at a sound level in lessons, but is below average overall, as requirements for different aspects of capability are not met in subjects. Achievement in design and technology remains below average, but shows an improving trend in lessons. GCSE results have improved markedly. Standards have improved in history and modern foreign languages. While examination results in science continue to be above average, achievement in some classes is only average. Although improvements were made last year in examination results, improvements in science are inconsistent and not as good as in most other subjects. Attainment in design and technology remains below average, but is steadily improving. Attainment of students taught information technology and entered for the first time at GCSE last year was sound, but most students have below average attainment.
- 29 Provision for special educational needs students has improved considerably and good teaching and management have secured good progress. As a key issue in the previous report, despite a slow start, the foundations for further improvement are now very secure.
- 30 Overall progress since the last inspection has been good, but there remains scope for further improvement, especially in Key Stage 3 tests and in individual subjects in both key stages. Provision for teaching information technology across the curriculum is not effective, and unsatisfactory progress has been made to resolve this key issue. In English and mathematics, there are already strategies in place to secure higher attainment. In science, inconsistencies in teaching and learning need to be more rigorously addressed to secure improvements.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes

- 31 Students' attitudes to learning are very good throughout the college. They are enthusiastic about their work and eager to succeed. They show great interest, and often enjoyment, in what they are asked to do, and apply themselves conscientiously to their work. Students take pride in their achievements and are keen to share their work with teachers and other adults. Almost all are able to sustain high levels of concentration through their lessons, but in a small number of lessons where teaching is poor, a few find it difficult to maintain their commitment, as observed, for instance,

in a Year 9 German lesson. All students are eager to be involved in fund raising for charities, and in participating in events outside school hours. 92% of parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their children like school.

Behaviour

- 32 Behaviour at the college is consistently very good. At the start of the day, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and at break-times, virtually all students show very high standards of behaviour. They move around the college in a quiet and orderly manner, and have a very clear understanding of the standards expected of them. In lessons, behaviour is nearly always good and often very good or better. Although there were 41 exclusions last year only one was permanent. On occasions, the decision to apply the exclusion sanction appears to be severe and the college needs to consider whether other behaviour management strategies may be more appropriate. The inspection found no evidence of bullying or lack of respect for college property. The great majority of parents responding to the questionnaire stated they believed behaviour to be good. At the parents meeting, many parents expressed a view that not only were students well behaved in the college, they were also well behaved on leaving the site and around the town. Observations during the inspection confirm these views.

Personal development and relationships

- 33 Relationships in the college are very good. Students form constructive relationships with each other and with adults. They work cooperatively together, demonstrating that they will listen with interest to each other and will try to understand the other person's point of view. When given the opportunity they show that they can collaborate well. Almost all students consistently demonstrate patience, tolerance and regard for others. Special needs students with identified emotional and behavioural difficulties form good relationships with teachers, other support staff and the counsellor. They appreciate the efforts made on their behalf.
- 34 Students' personal development is very good. The college provides many opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility and they demonstrate that the trust is well placed. The student council offers students the opportunity to reflect their views and ideas. Students regularly perform jobs within the classroom and around the college. As students progress through the college greater degrees of independence are encouraged and students respond well. Prefects and other Year 11 students regularly help the younger ones in a range of different ways. The 'bully buddy' system, as found in the previous inspection, continues to be effective. Students with special educational needs feel secure in the base provided for them, and enjoy using it outside lesson time for learning and social activity.

Attendance

- 35 Attendance at the college is now consistently good. Unauthorised absence is below average. Punctuality is still a problem. Too many students arrive late at college often due to the late arrival of buses. This hinders the attempts by the college to make a prompt and efficient start to the working day. The layout of the site and the distance that students have to transfer between lessons means that too much time is lost moving around the site, and too much learning time is lost.

Progress since the previous report

- 36 Standards of behaviour around the college remain good and, because teaching has improved, there are far fewer instances of poor classroom behaviour. Attendance has improved, although punctuality is still a problem. Students in all year groups now show positive attitudes to their work.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 37 Teaching overall is good and has a positive effect on students' learning. There are wide variations in the quality of teaching, but in 92% of lessons, teaching is at least satisfactory or better. In 61% of lessons it is at least good or better. Teaching is very good or better in 29% of lessons, and excellent in 8% of lessons. In 8% of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory, with 3% of poor quality. Very good and excellent teaching and learning are found consistently in every year group. There are proportionally more unsatisfactory lessons in Years 7 - 9 than in Years 10 – 11, with the highest number in Year 9.
- 38 Teaching and learning are very good overall in English, art, geography, history, German and music. They are good in mathematics, modern foreign languages, and information technology lessons. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in design and technology, physical education, and religious education. In these subjects and in modern foreign languages, there are a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching and learning in science are unsatisfactory. While there is good and very good teaching by some teachers in almost four out of ten lessons, three out of ten lessons have serious weaknesses, and one lesson in eight is poor.

Excellent, very good and good teaching and learning

- 39 Excellent and very good teaching occurs in most subjects. It is found most often in art and history where 75% of lessons observed were very good or excellent. In geography, music and mathematics at least 50% were very good or excellent. Where teaching is of high quality, students make very good progress and achieved high standards.
- 40 Where teaching was observed to be good, very good or excellent, the characteristics of lessons included:
- lively and stimulating approaches, which capture students' interest and make them want to learn, are a feature of all high quality lessons;
 - teachers showing high levels of knowledge about their own subject, *as found in many German and French lessons where students learn to use the language well because their teachers speak it very well, and use it throughout their lessons;*
 - stimulating and challenging work which allows students to demonstrate high levels of skill, *as in Year 11 textiles lessons where boys and girls create their own well crafted and imaginative stage costume designs;*
 - very well planned lesson activities to enable students working at different rates to

carry on learning throughout the lesson, as seen in a Year 8 music lesson, where students who finished the tasks set had additional and challenging work to do which extended their creative instrumental work in using complex rhythms;

- very good management of students, such as seen in a lesson led by a special needs teacher, who carefully managed a difficult and volatile student with changes of activity during the lesson to maintain interest, which helped the student concentrate so he improved his levels of literacy;
- clear lesson objectives set, with very good use of time and resources, so no time is wasted, for example in a Year 9 English lesson on 'Romeo and Juliet' the teacher quickly organised the students by giving clear instructions, had materials well prepared, and circulated around the groups in order to help students clarify and develop their ideas effectively, enabling them to make very good progress;
- very carefully planned lesson activities to ensure that difficult subjects are presented in ways students understand, as seen in a Year 11 geography lesson on the weather and climate where a series of very clear diagrams and descriptions, and challenging questioning of the students, helped them to understand clearly the effects of weather patterns;
- emphasis on important basic skills such as literacy. In many history lessons careful attention is given to teaching key words and ensuring students understand what they mean, and have the opportunity to use them in oral and written work;
- very good use of on-going assessment, as seen in art lessons where students have very good understanding of examination criteria and, through written and verbal feedback, know their own levels of attainment and have clear understanding of how to improve;
- very good use of homework, as set in a Year 7 mathematics lesson where the teacher ensured that students were clear about what they had to do, and where they could find information to help them work independently;
- well developed relationships between teachers and students so teachers know the students well and are able to help them make progress in their learning. This was seen in a Year 7 religious education lesson where students giving oral presentations to the rest of the class were encouraged and given confidence by the supportive atmosphere created;
- well prepared support materials to ensure that students understand what they are learning and have guidance to help them make progress, such as those used in a Year 8 science lesson on reflection, and in graphics lessons in design and technology;
- careful attention given to ensuring all students are able to contribute to discussion, as seen in many lessons, including a Year 10 physical education lesson where students with special educational needs were able to contribute equally with others in the group, and all members of the class learned to clearly distinguish between good and bad sporting behaviour;
- examples used of relevance to students' own interests, as seen in a Year 9 information technology lesson where a well designed task and stimulus about advertising allowed students to develop their own ideas about the value of

computers to society.

Satisfactory teaching and learning

- 41 In addition to the excellent, very good and good lessons, about three in ten lessons are satisfactory. These lessons provide an acceptable level of teaching with neither particular strengths or weaknesses. They are planned and delivered effectively and promote sound progress.

Unsatisfactory and poor teaching and learning.

- 42 Unsatisfactory and poor lessons do not enable students to make enough progress, and demonstrate one or more of the following weaknesses:
- lack of teacher subject knowledge and expertise, *for example in some religious education lessons*, leading to an over dependence on teaching materials, and a lack of responsiveness to student needs. In these lessons students cannot make progress because the teacher does not know well enough how to help them;
 - lack of clear learning objectives for lessons so activities are not effectively planned, and students are not clear what it is they are supposed to be learning, *as seen in a science lesson where students did not know the purpose of the experiment they were watching*. This leads to wasted time with little or no progress made.
 - no consolidation of what students already know in order for the teacher to take them further in their learning;
 - poorly developed relationships, with students losing interest because the teacher does not seem interested in what they are teaching, or has weak student management skills. This very occasionally leads to poor behaviour by some boys, *as observed in a German lesson*. In these lessons, all students suffer and their learning is disrupted;
 - too much time during lessons is dominated by the teacher talking, rather than students being actively involved in their work;
 - insufficient challenge in activities to fully develop students' skills, knowledge or understanding, *as in some hour long one-to-one sessions for special educational needs students*.

Special educational needs

- 43 Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs, for whom additional provision is made, is good. Specialist staff have good perceptive understanding of students' individual needs, and are particularly well briefed in the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy. They use these skills well, setting high expectations. However, there is a lack of rigour in some one-to-one sessions, which are too long for students to sustain concentration and can result in activities with low demand or challenge which do not help students learn. When taught as part of a class, teaching and learning of special educational needs students is also of a good standard. In the best lessons, teachers deliver high quality teaching that meets the needs of all members of the class, and enables special needs students to make progress with little requirement for any additional adult support. However, the use made of support does vary between subjects. When not properly utilised, at its worst

it becomes patronising and over-indulgent, and does not support students' own learning.

Meeting the needs of gifted and talented students

- 44 In response to a clear teaching focus last year, performance in GCSE results improved above expectations, and greater attention is now being given to higher attaining students. Increased focus on these students in English and mathematics has begun but has not yet had time for its effectiveness to be evaluated. Provision through teaching, for gifted and talented students, is in the early stages of development with the recent formation of a college working party to examine their needs. Availability of assessment data is enabling better identification of the individual potential of students. Gifted and talented students do make very good progress and reach high levels of attainment in art, music and German through high quality teaching, but are not always sufficiently challenged in most other subjects.

Other factors in teaching

- 45 26% of parents who responded to the questionnaire do not feel their children get enough homework, but 74% do. At the parents' meeting, the view was strongly expressed that the homework timetable created difficulties for students in managing their work. Parents also had a wide range of concerns about the setting of homework. The college shares the concerns of parents and a newly appointed member of the senior management team has already identified areas for improvement. The inspection confirms the views of parents that the timetable is not helpful to students. However, homework set during the inspection was found to be of sound quality. Parents also identified subjects, notably mathematics and German, where great pains had been taken to ensure students who had been absent were helped to catch up and continue to make progress. Views were very strongly expressed that parents recognise that teachers work hard and that they value the teachers' efforts. The inspection supports the views of the parents that the great majority of teachers work hard to provide good quality teaching and learning and ensure students make progress.
- 46 Although there is no whole college marking policy, the quality of marking is generally sound. It is particularly good in English and art, where students are provided with good guidance on how to improve. In most other subjects marking is regular, but varies in usefulness in helping students to improve. It is inconsistent and often not very good in science - a view expressed by parents and confirmed by the inspection.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 47 At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was identified as being sound or better in four out of five lessons with half of those having good features. Very good features were found in only a small number. The proportion of sound or better lessons found now has risen to over nine out of ten [92%] with only 8% now judged unsatisfactory. Over six out of ten lessons show good features, and almost three out of ten are of high quality. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs has improved considerably from unsatisfactory to good. This shows very good improvement in the overall quality of teaching, although a few lessons remain unsatisfactory. The rigorous steps taken by the college to improve the quality of teaching have been effective where these have been consistently applied. There remain small pockets of unsatisfactory teaching by individual teachers, which need to be addressed through the systems already well established in the college.

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

The curriculum

- 48 The mission statement of the college contains no direct reference to the curricular entitlements of the full time students, and in policy documents there is no clear statement of what the college sets out to achieve for its students through the curriculum. The absence of clearly stated aims makes it difficult for the college to evaluate and review the quality of its own curricular provision, or to make this clear to parents or a wider audience.
- 49 In Key Stage 3, the college provides a broad range of experience, including discrete drama lessons and the opportunity to study a second foreign language. The allocation of time to individual subjects is satisfactory, with the exception of design and technology where there is insufficient time to cover the required programmes of study of the National Curriculum. Although most students have one lesson each week in information technology, the intention that required aspects not covered by this lesson will be delivered through other subjects is not happening. Consequently, some aspects of the required programmes of study, such as control and sensing, are not being sufficiently taught. Additionally, students studying two modern foreign languages receive an unequal allocation of time as they have only one information technology lesson a fortnight and, in Year 8, none at all. Provision overall is therefore unsatisfactory.
- 50 In Key Stage 4, provision is made for all the required subjects but, in a number, there is insufficient time allocated to meet statutory requirements. The teaching of religious education as part of the tutorial programme does not enable students to cover the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and standards of achievement are poor. As in Key Stage 3, the teaching of information technology in other subjects does not work successfully, and students other than those studying information technology as a GCSE course are not gaining the knowledge and experience in this area to which they are entitled. Insufficient time is given to physical education for students not studying for a GCSE examination, so skills, knowledge and fitness are not fully developed. Other than in these areas, the overall curriculum provides breadth through the large number of subjects that all students study, leaving fewer option choices than normally seen. Unusually, all students study English language and English literature, as well as two sciences, and art. When other required areas are added, this leaves little scope for choice for students, but the majority of students leave the college with good examination results across a wide range of subjects. However, the Key Stage 4 curriculum offers almost exclusively GCSE courses. While based on past performance this meets the needs of most students, this single route is not appropriate for some of the students now attending the college.
- 51 Good provision is made for students with a wide variety of special educational needs, with a clear focus on the development of literacy and numeracy. Students for whom specific provision is made receive a high quality curriculum, with very good additional opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities in the base and other parts of the college. Other special needs students are also welcomed to the base at lunchtime, and after school, for advice and support from the special needs coordinators, learning support assistants and the college counsellor. Speech therapy provision, which is a requirement of some statements of special educational need, is not being provided.

- 52 Almost all students have access to the full curriculum, other than students studying two languages, as identified above. The college provides a very good level of support for students whose first language is not English. This enables them to gain the fullest possible integration into the complete curriculum. A very small number of special needs students have not been formally disapplied from the statutory requirements to study a modern foreign language.

Literacy and numeracy

- 53 Provision and planning for literacy is good. The college is developing a whole college approach to the teaching and support of literacy. There is a cross-curricular literacy working party, which is working at developing a whole college policy document, and prioritising key areas for development. It is most securely taught within English and through the work of the special needs team. Literacy is advanced well in these areas. Many of the other areas of the curriculum are beginning to put strategies in place. Good practice is particularly visible in art, mathematics and humanities subjects.
- 54 There is no whole college numeracy policy although provision for teaching numeracy is sound. Although the mathematics department has good knowledge of the National Numeracy Framework through link visits to primary feeder schools, and is beginning to align its curriculum to ensure compatibility, policies and planning have not yet been fully revised to reflect this. Within subjects, numeracy is most effectively used in design and technology, geography and science.

Personal, social, health and careers education

- 55 Provision for personal, social and health education is the focus of a newly appointed member of the senior management team. Personal and social education (PSE) is delivered as, one lesson per week within the tutorial programme. The expertise of the staff who deliver the lessons is variable, and resources are poor, so although teaching is at least sound, even good teachers produce a quality of lesson which does not match their standard of teaching in their own subjects. The quality of the programme is not adequately monitored, and a review is underway. While most elements of the programme are sound, some aspects of health, drugs and sex education do not inform students early enough or firmly enough about the risks and choices they will have to face.
- 56 The careers education programme sets itself ambitious objectives in its mission statement, but does not fully meet them. The library contains a sufficient range of information on careers, in printed and electronic form. Careers education is delivered within the PSE schedule by form tutors, with variable degrees of expertise, and by an expert external adviser, who has a very positive influence. Careers interviews have been provided by the external adviser, either to groups or to individuals, but only very recently for all students. Work experience in Year 10 is a profitable experience. These separate functions operate effectively, but without enough interconnection to make them fully effective.

Extra-curricular provision

- 57 There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities on offer. A good range

of sessions to support the curriculum takes place at lunchtimes and after school. Opportunities in the arts are particularly strong. There is a good range of sporting activities offered to boys and girls from all year groups during lunchtime and after school. The activities available range from individual and team games such as badminton, football, netball and hockey to gym club and weight training sessions. There is good take-up by students for activities and the college monitors attendance.

Links with the community and other schools

- 58 The college maintains strong links with its local community, which is reflected in its current and past Schools Curriculum Awards. As a provider of community education, strong links have been established with other related agencies, and these are reported as a specified feature at the end of Section B of this report. Liaison with feeder primary schools is well maintained for both pastoral and academic purposes. Parents express very positive views about the quality of links and induction procedures, which help their children to transfer confidently to the college. There are good links within the Rutland family of schools. The college does its best to ensure smooth transition into the next phase of learning, but some parents express a desire for more information to be provided by the educational institutions to which the students transfer when they are age 16.

Spiritual development

- 59 The provision made for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The college does not provide enough opportunities for students to take part in collective worship. All students attend one assembly a week in their year group. Year assemblies are well organised and focus on a clear theme such as 'friends'. Students take an active role in planning and presenting some of the assemblies. They include an act of collective worship and students are given the opportunity to consider their own response to the theme through prayer or personal reflection. Other opportunities for collective worship during form time are not utilised and provision is unsatisfactory.
- 60 In Key Stage 3, all students have religious education lessons, which provide good opportunities for spiritual development and reflection. Students are encouraged to consider their own views of God and to reflect on what is of value to them in their own life. The lack of provision of religious education for all students in Key Stage 4 means that many opportunities for older students to consider issues related to personal beliefs and values are lost. Insufficient attention has been given to the provision for spiritual development in other subjects. Opportunities to reflect on the spiritual dimension offered in the topics covered are often missed.

Moral development

- 61 Provision for the moral development of students is good. They have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Teachers and other adults provide effective role models and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect within the college. Fund raising activities provide good opportunities to consider the needs of others. Every year, students successfully raise funds to support local and national charities such as the Rutland Society for the Blind, and Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. Opportunities to explore moral perspectives are evident through the personal and social education curriculum where topics such as bullying and relationships are covered. Moral development in other subjects is implicit rather than explicit. For example, the emphasis on playing by the rules in physical education.

Social development

- 62 Arrangements to promote the social development of students are very good. Students have the opportunity to work in class in a variety of groupings and they respond well to this. There are many opportunities to take responsibility. The student council provides a good opportunity for students from all years to exercise responsibility and develop their understanding of citizenship through active involvement in projects to improve the college grounds. Students in Year 11 can take responsibility in the college by volunteering to be prefects, and this gives them the opportunity to both work with adults and mix with younger students. Extra-curricular activities such as trips abroad, the community choir and sports provide very good opportunities for social development.

Cultural development

- 63 The college makes good provision for many aspects of students' cultural development. Provision for the arts is strong, especially in the visual arts which all students study throughout their time in the college. A good range of arts and music extra-curricular activities such as the choir, productions, the arts festival and the fashion show offer opportunities for cultural development. Other opportunities are offered through modern language trips to France and Germany, art visits to the National Gallery and British Museum, and theatre trips. The previous inspection reported that the college did not prepare students well for life in a multicultural society. The college has worked hard to increase the range of opportunities available for students to appreciate the richness of other cultures. In English lessons, the texts used reflect a range of cultures such as African and Asian. In music and art, opportunities are taken to use examples from a variety of cultures. However the college still does not make enough use of the relatively close proximity of minority ethnic communities, such as those found in Leicester or Peterborough, and does not prepare students sufficiently well for life in a culturally diverse society.
- 64 No reference is made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students in the mission statement of the college, and policy documents contain no clear statements on how the college seeks to promote students' learning in this area. The absence of a clear policy in these areas means that provision is uneven, as it is not planned into schemes of work or monitored.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 65 Since the previous inspection, sound progress has been made in meeting the statutory requirements for religious education in Key Stage 3 but provision for this subject at Key Stage 4, although improved, is still unsatisfactory. Personal and social education is now taught through a designated weekly lesson and the content of the programme is under review. Improvements have been made in allocations of time for music and art, but imbalances of time still exist for other subjects. Provision of information technology has improved through a weekly lesson for most students in Key Stage 3, but provision across the curriculum has not been secured in either key stage, and as a key issue for action, progress has been unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 66 The college arrangements for the care of its students are satisfactory overall. All staff at the college work hard to promote high standards of good behaviour, and the whole college community understands the code of conduct. The behaviour policy is

effective in providing an appropriate context for rules, rewards and sanctions to be understood well, and accepted by the students. Procedures to improve the monitoring and promotion of behaviour and discipline are currently being reviewed and improved. The college is effective in promoting an environment where bullying and oppressive behaviour is not accepted

Attendance

- 67 The college has effective systems in place to monitor and promote good attendance. Registers are marked accurately and efficiently, all absences are properly noted and appropriate contact is made with parents to justify absence. Good links with the Educational Welfare Officer ensure appropriate follow-up for students who require further support. Annual figures for attendance are correctly aggregated and published as required in the governors' report to parents, and in the college prospectus.

Welfare, health and safety

- 68 There are satisfactory policies in place to ensure the health and safety of students and the governing body is beginning to move the college forward in terms of its organisation of health and safety procedures. Risk assessments have begun in some areas, but are not yet taking place across the whole college. During the inspection, a small number of health and safety issues were identified: some fire doors were locked posing a potential danger to the college community and the physical education department was not complying with the teacher/student recommended ratios for supervising swimming. Some items of equipment in design and technology workshops do not meet requirements, and the college has been provided with a list of these.
- 69 Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements and there is a designated teacher who is known to all staff.

Assessment

- 70 Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. There are accurate and reliable systems in place for assessing standards across all subjects except in information technology. They are based on a very comprehensive assessment policy, which outlines appropriate procedures for assessment, recording and reporting. Assessment for students in Year 9 is based on the levels defined by the National Curriculum for each subject. The consistency between teacher assessments is monitored effectively by the senior management team, and subject coordinators.
- 71 The assessment of students with special educational needs meets statutory requirements and systems are effective. Targets in individual education plans are detailed and procedures indicate clearly to students what they need to do next in order to improve. Good assessment arrangements are in place to monitor literacy and numeracy levels. Levels of personal support are very good. Students with behavioural difficulties benefit considerably from opportunities to consult the student counsellor. This work is beginning to impact on the students with the most challenging behaviour. All students with special educational needs receive good levels of support. The special needs coordinator has records for all students likely to experience difficulties, and has regular contact with subject teachers.
- 72 Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are excellent.

The college gathers information by analysing test and examination results. A very good range of assessment information is available on individual students in Years 9 - 11 and very good use of this is beginning in subject departments. The monitoring process is beginning to have a positive impact on the standards that students achieve by enabling departments to compare current and potential attainment. The policy has effectively raised teachers' expectations of what students can achieve. Students in Years 9 - 11 are set target grades for all National Curriculum and examination subjects, and these are included in their reports. In mathematics and art, individual target setting is particularly well developed and students understand well what they need to do in order to reach their personal targets. However, such practice is not yet consistent across all subject departments.

- 73 The close monitoring of the academic progress of students has provided some useful information about the curriculum. The use of this assessment information to review and plan future work in departments across the college is good. In geography, for example, assessment data has been used to show that students aged 11 to 14 need to do more independent work. In modern foreign languages, the teaching of reading has been identified as an area of weakness among GCSE students which needs to be addressed.

Personal support and guidance

- 74 The college provides appropriate support and guidance for its students. At the heart of the pastoral system are the form tutors who are usually assigned to groups of students for their full five years at the college, and who grow to know their students well. Special educational needs staff provide caring and sensitive support for those for whom special provision is made. The personal and social education programme that is taught during tutorial time by form tutors is currently under review. This programme has had a low status among students and teachers, and parents at the pre-inspection meeting also voiced some criticisms of the quality of materials used. The quality of the planning and delivery of the programme is not yet systematically monitored. Form tutors and year tutors have some effective systems for responding to and reviewing the progress of individual students, particularly when there is a cause for concern. However, systems for monitoring the quality of support and advice given to individuals, based on their personal development and behaviour, are not as clearly defined as systems for monitoring academic progress.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 75 Since the previous inspection, the college has introduced taught tutorial time as recommended in the key issues for action. However, the content of the personal and social development programme is in need of modification to encourage more interest by both teachers and students in health and personal development. Health and safety issues advised to the college have been effectively addressed, but this inspection raises further issues which require attention, and of which the college has been advised. There is now an expectation that risk assessments are carried out throughout the college, and the expert help available from the governing body should continue to be used to ensure that health and safety meet current requirements. The college continues to provide a secure environment, and measures taken since the previous inspection have improved attendance. Problems of lateness to lessons have not been resolved. With improved teaching, the great majority of students now apply the code of conduct more consistently in their behaviour. Excellent progress has been made in establishing systems that monitor student academic achievement

and inform curriculum planning. Great improvements have been made in the provision of support for special educational needs students.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 76 Parents confirm that the college has many strengths. Almost all parents feel comfortable about approaching the college with a problem. However, in the responses to the questionnaire, 26% of parents expressed the view that they would like the college to work more closely with them. Parents present at the meeting raised concerns regarding the completion of homework diaries, the arrangements for parents' evenings and the information they receive about their children's progress. They were also unclear about the values that the college promotes other than good behaviour.
- 77 Scrutiny of the homework diaries during the inspection shows them to be properly completed by the students, parents and the form tutor. They fully detail the quantity of the work and deadlines for completion but, as suggested by parents, their use offers the potential for much wider communication with parents than found at present.
- 78 Parents are well informed about the college and their children's activities through a good quality range of regular newsletters and the governors' annual report to parents. However, while the prospectus contains all the required aspects and other useful information, it does not make clear the specific aims of the college in relation to the provision made for children of compulsory school age. Reports to parents do not fully meet legal requirements. While they contain much detail about attainment, they do not give enough subject specific information about the progress made by students. There is no report on religious education as required in Key Stage 4.
- 79 The college has made strenuous attempts to involve parents. Governors have organised clinics that have been poorly attended. Many parents support their children's work at home and take an active interest in the work set, and some parents help with trips. Many students have home computers to help them in their studies. Parents make an active contribution to the governing body, and a number are employed in the college. Parental support is also given in English with paired reading, and in sharing experiences such as wartime evacuation. The Parent Teacher Association [PTA] works hard to promote the college, and organises a range of activities which provide additional financial support, amounting to between £2000 and £3000 each year.
- 80 Parents at the meeting indicated they had found it difficult to make appointments with all the teachers they wanted to see on parents' evenings. They felt that the consultation arrangements were too open, with insufficient privacy to discuss sensitive issues. Additionally they expressed concern that for students in Years 8, 9 and 11 there is only one parents' evening each year, so numbers attending make access to see all teachers difficult. Evidence confirms that parents' concerns regarding the evening meetings are justified. The college needs to consider how it can offer better access for parents in their information meetings.
- 81 Parents of students with special educational needs have very good links with the college, and attendance at the annual reviews of statements is very high. During the inspection, a review took place for a student entering the college, and the parent who attended this expressed the view that her involvement in the target setting had been excellent. There was little evidence during the inspection week of parental involvement on a voluntary basis supporting work in the special needs base.

However, parents feel comfortable coming into the base, and speak positively about their relationships with the special needs staff.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 82 Information to parents about the work of the college has improved through more regular newsletters. Reports to parents have been modified as required in the key issues for action, and interim reports introduced. However, as they do not yet fully comply with current requirements further modifications are needed in the way they are presented.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership

- 83 The leadership and management of the college by the senior staff and governing body are very good. The principal is an excellent leader. He ensures the staff and governors recognise that the college functions to provide the best opportunities for all students, with a focus on achievement across a wide range of activity. A clear approach to accountability has produced many positive features in the management of the college. Under his leadership, college self-review has become well established. He effectively prioritises, has a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, and rigorously addresses areas in need of development, in order to improve as quickly as possible the quality of education for students already in the college. This has resulted in a college where students want to learn, teaching and learning continue to improve, and there has been a rise in attainment since the previous inspection.

Senior and middle management

- 84 The senior management team have individual and complementary skills of a high order, and the team as a whole provides excellent leadership and management. The recently appointed vice principal has a very clear grasp of areas for development, and has quickly assessed where to direct her energies. She has initiated a much needed curriculum review, and is beginning to address inconsistencies in the quality of form tutoring and the pastoral structure. The assistant vice principal has established a very comprehensive database that provides excellent information on which college, subject and individual targets can be based. She provides a very clear picture about the performance of the college. The monitoring of individual academic performance, especially for older students, is exceptional. The bursar is very efficient, and her role on the senior management team allows her to have a very clear view on the implications of spending. Her dual role of site manager makes efficient use of her skills, and enables clear line management for non-teaching staff. The college office runs effectively and routines are well established.

- 85 The creation at the start of the term of an extended senior management team by internal staff promotion is, by the allocation of specific responsibilities, enabling the college to direct attention to areas in need of development. It has the additional benefit of providing very good professional development for the staff concerned. The

two most senior appointees have quickly assessed what needs to be done in their areas of responsibility for improving homework, and developing the programme for personal, social and health education.

- 86 The leadership and management of subjects overall is good, and it is very good in English, mathematics, art, humanities [history, geography and religious education], modern foreign languages, and music. In a number of subjects a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has led to improvements in standards. This has been most evident in higher GCSE results in French. The quality of leadership and management in science is much weaker than in other subjects. Strategies for improvement have been inconsistently applied. Planning for the subject is weak, and the monitoring of teaching and marking are irregular and lack rigour.
- 87 The leadership and management of provision for special educational needs students is good. The clear direction given by the coordinator in promoting improved levels of literacy and numeracy is very good. There is rigorous development of learning support assistants to make them effective in their teaching role. Management liaison with the nominated special educational needs governor is good. Since her appointment in September, the special educational needs coordinator has worked hard to improve the department. Firm foundations for improvement are now in place. However, an anxiety to improve things quickly has resulted in an over ambitious development plan for this year. This has now been recognised, and the coordinator and governor are planning appropriate modifications.
- 88 The departure at the end of last term of the assistant vice principal responsible for the pastoral system leaves the leadership and management of this area ready for review and development. Management of the pastoral system is sound, but monitoring is not as rigorous as that found in the academic system.

The Governing Body

- 89 A very experienced and highly respected Chair, who has dedicated many years in support of the college, effectively leads the governing body. He has a very clear vision for the development of the college provision as one where students of all backgrounds and abilities are valued and nurtured. Members of the governing body show high levels of commitment to their role, and bring very good skills and professional expertise from which the college benefits very considerably. They have excellent knowledge and understanding about the work of the college, its standards and where improvements can be made. This is mainly due to the very high quality of information provided to them by the principal and the bursar. The information enables them to be actively involved in determining strategic direction and holding the college to account. The well-established committee structure enables work to be conducted effectively in smaller focused groupings so time in full governors' meetings can be used efficiently. All governors participate fully in one or more of the committees, most of which are very active. The resources committee is the most influential and meets most often, but the curriculum committee is under-active. Developments within the college, and outcomes and standards, are closely monitored and evaluated both through careful analysis of documentation and by challenging debate. Individual governor links with faculties are established, but visiting the college as a means of monitoring is less systematic. Where the governing body is less successful is in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met, and there are a number of important areas of non-compliance. These are listed at the end of this section of the report.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 90 The college very effectively monitors and evaluates its performance, and is able to very clearly identify its strengths and the areas for improvement. Development planning is of a very good quality, and provides clear educational direction to improve standards. Planning is analytical, sets clear targets and accountabilities and is fully costed. It is reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness by governors, senior and middle managers and teaching staff. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is well established through senior managers and subject leaders, and unsatisfactory teaching and student performance have been rigorously addressed. The principal meets well the targets set for him by governors. Effective systems are in place for the appraisal of all staff including non-teaching staff, and the governing body has discussed a draft performance management policy. Staff development is clearly linked to development planning and appraisal, and evaluated for its impact on standards of teaching, learning and attainment. The excellent range of data available enables the college to set informed targets for the college and subjects, and increasingly at an individual student level. As a result, the level of unsatisfactory teaching and learning in the college has fallen markedly since the previous inspection, attainment has risen in a number of subjects and in GCSE examinations rose to well above average levels last year.

Financial management

- 91 The senior management team and governors exercise very effective and efficient management of the college's finances. The college development plan provides a secure foundation upon which the strategic direction of the college is based and the plan contains appropriate well-costed targets for development. Educational priorities are supported very well through careful financial management, with grants and additional funding, including that for special educational needs, being appropriately used. The governors, through the work of the resources committee, critically review expenditure plans, monitor budget spend and pursue best value through rigorous tendering. The excellent work of the bursar ensures very good day-to-day financial administration, with regular expenditure statements to all cost centre managers. The linking of site management responsibility to the role of the bursar is ensuring cost effective procedures. The income and expenditure on student education is generally high, though staffing costs are economic. Learning resources are supported well through capitation, although the library is under-resourced and requires further development. Special educational needs students are appropriately funded with good progress resulting from the investment in support staff.

Staffing, accommodation and resources for learning

- 92 Teaching staff are well qualified, and mainly teach their specialist subjects except for a few lessons in religious education, where lack of teacher subject knowledge contributes to unsatisfactory lessons. The college has Investor in People status, and a commitment to continued professional development has contributed to improved teaching. Induction and both support for newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the college are well planned and meet new requirements. Insufficient technical support is available to support information technology and science, resulting in teachers having to prepare and maintain resources themselves, which is an inefficient use of their time.
- 93 Accommodation is of very variable quality, with several older buildings requiring regular maintenance. The large site creates problems with students often arriving

late to lessons. The close proximity of a road to the buildings means the site has to be negotiated with great care. A well-planned programme of refurbishment has led to a pleasant and stimulating internal environment where this has been undertaken. Many rooms also benefit from high quality displays of work, and corridors and public spaces are enriched by students' artwork. Specialist science accommodation is of poor quality, but also suffers from little attempt being made in some laboratories to create a positive learning environment.

- 94 The college has a higher proportion of computers than usually found. While new technologies are used effectively for administrative work and assessment, and in the taught information technology courses, they are under-used elsewhere in the college. Many teachers lack expertise in their use, and this is an area of development rightly targeted by the college. In some areas, such as music, use of information technology is limited by the lack of availability of appropriate equipment. In design and technology expensive control technology equipment cannot be used, as appropriate software is not available. The special educational needs base has technical difficulties that prevent the use of appropriate software. These factors contribute to the lack of coverage of information technology within subjects.
- 95 The library is well used, but the overall number of books is low. Provision is particularly weak in non-fiction materials for subjects such as history, geography, science and religious education. There are too few fiction books to interest older students and more able readers. Learning resources are barely adequate in some subjects, notably design and technology, where there are insufficient books, and religious education, where the range of materials available is limited. The special educational needs department has too few games and activities, and this limits the scope for improved individual teaching

Aims, values and capacity for improvement

- 96 The Vale of Catmose College is a community college that caters for adults on a part-time basis, as well as offering full-time school provision for students aged 11- 16. The mission statement of the college expresses clear aspirations for the overall development of all students who attend the college. There is no further statement of how these aims relate particularly to the provision for students in compulsory full-time education. Within the college, the governing body and staff are clear that the purpose of their work is to enable these students to make the best possible progress and reach good standards, and students are well motivated to learn. However, parents are much less clear about the aims and values promoted by the college for their children, as they are not clearly expressed in college documentation. The Vale of Catmose College is a good school that has now established the management systems by which it could become a very good school. It shows very good commitment and capacity for further improvement. Areas of relative weakness are known, and systems and personnel are largely already in place to address them. Improvements achieved have happened over time. The college now needs to reflect upon and celebrate its successes and changes, and establish clearer aims and priorities for students aged 11 to 16 that can be shared and promoted with a wider audience, and by which it can further evaluate the success of its work.
- 97 Areas where the college does not comply with legal requirements or recommendations:
- Insufficient provision made in Key Stage 4 for all students to cover the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education.

- Insufficient coverage of programmes of study for all students in information technology in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Insufficient time devoted to design and technology in Key Stage 3 and physical education for all students in Key Stage 4 to cover all aspects of the required programmes of study.
- The disapplication of some special educational needs students from modern foreign language lessons.
- Provision of speech therapy as specified in statements of special educational need.
- The reporting on progress made by students in the annual reports to parents, and in providing a report on religious education for all students in Key Stage 4.
- Provision of a daily act of worship for all students.
- Areas of health and safety which have been identified to the college.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 98 The leadership and management of the college remain positive features of provision. Monitoring and evaluation are now very effectively embedded in college practice and have had a very positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The improvements made in the collection of data and the use made of it are excellent. Standards of attainment have risen as a result of the very good management practices now evident in almost all aspects of the college. The quality of accommodation has improved. Sound or better progress has been made in response to most key issues for action identified in the previous report. However, progress has not been satisfactory in meeting statutory requirements, or in making adequate provision for the teaching of information technology. The college continues to have weaknesses in meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education, for worship, and in reporting to parents.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To build on and improve further the good standards already achieved in many areas of college provision, the senior management, governors and staff of the college should:

Use the planned curriculum review in conjunction with National Curriculum 2000 requirements to provide all students with their curriculum entitlements by:

- establishing clear aims and objectives related to curriculum priorities and provision for students aged 11 – 16 and sharing these with all members of the college community including parents;
- providing teaching in information technology for all students which covers fully the programmes of study and enables them to reach levels of attainment at least in line with national expectations;
- allocating sufficient time to cover the programmes of study for design and technology in Key Stage 3 and physical education in Key Stage 4;
- meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education in Key Stage 4;
- increasing opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum;
- preparing students more effectively for life in a culturally diverse society;
- providing alternative pathways at Key Stage 4 to meet the changing needs of the school population.

Ref paragraphs: 48–50, 59, 60, 63, 64

Improve the quality of teaching, learning and management in science by:

- establishing rigour in monitoring, planning and resource management to the levels found in other subjects;
- improving unsatisfactory teaching to the sound and better levels found elsewhere in the department;
- raising the attainment of girls.

Ref paragraphs: 130–138, 141

Raise attainment:

- of talented and gifted students, especially in **English, mathematics and science and other subjects identified in the report** to higher levels in national tests and examinations;
- of students in **design and technology** and **religious education** to at least average standards, by improving the quality of teaching in the small number of unsatisfactory lessons to the sound and better levels found elsewhere in these subjects.

Ref paragraphs: 4, 44, 112, 121, 131, 152-157, 161, 177-180 187, 209-213

Strengthen links with parents by:

- improving the quality of reports to ensure that subject specific progress is always reported and that parents receive an annual report on religious education.

Ref paragraphs: 78

Other areas for development are identified in the following paragraphs: 32, 35, 55,68, 74, 80, 97, 108, 119, 129, 151, 159, 167, 176, 186, 192, 198, 208, 216.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Special Provision

- 100 The college makes additional special provision for nine students who would otherwise attend special schools outside Rutland. Overall provision, including that to support other special educational needs students across the college, is in an evolutionary phase. The recently appointed special needs co-ordinator [SENCo] is laying very good foundations for its future development.
- 101 There are 139 students in the college with identified special educational needs, 26 of whom have statements. By the age of 14, students have made good progress, especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties [EBD] and by those students with literacy and numeracy problems. At age 16, most students have achieved at least one GCSE A*-G level. However, the sharp increase of student numbers on the special needs register during recent years requires close monitoring to ensure achievement levels are maintained.
- 102 Student progress overall is good. By age 14, there is clear evidence that literacy and numeracy skills are improving. The SENCo maintains thorough records of students' progress, which form the basis for target setting and are shared with teachers across the college. Students with behavioural difficulties show very much improved behaviour by age 14, and this is continued throughout the remainder of their education at the college. Good progress was seen in drama, where students show confidence in performing within groups and before the full class. Work on the musical "Cats" enabled students to show a perceptive response to the music. For example, one student described the music as 'slinky'.
- 103 Attitudes, values and the personal development of students are good. The parents of students benefiting from the special provision told of their youngsters' keenness to attend college and to communicate their enjoyment of the experiences they are getting. The behaviour of those students with behavioural problems is very well managed by teachers with a special needs brief, and increasingly so by subject specialists throughout the college. The college counsellor is beginning to see the intervention strategies deployed having both a very positive influence on the behaviour of individuals and on the learning of others. Students make very good use of the special needs base at lunch time, when they play games, use computers or seek help from special learning support assistants [LSAs]. After school, there is a 'work-club', which is very well attended.
- 104 Teaching and learning are of good quality and at times they are very good. Where it is at its best, teachers show a very good understanding of both the special educational needs of their students, and knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. This was very evident in the teaching of 'Macbeth' to a group of challenging

14/15 year olds. The play was being read aloud by the class, and at an appropriate time the students were asked how Shakespeare had introduced tension to a scene involving Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The depth of technical understanding of the text was evident when students suggested that short sentences had been used to create pace and atmosphere. Students felt that the players would speak the words quickly and quietly. The teacher had the skills to lead students in their appreciation of the text through well-directed interventions. In some one-to-one sessions teaching was less successful as students found it difficult to cope with a one hour period, and they adopted a range of strategies to move away from the set tasks. These lessons direct a disproportionate amount of time to menial tasks such as cutting and pasting paper.

- 105 Leadership and management are good. The SENCo works closely with the college counsellor and the governor with responsibility for special educational needs. They meet frequently, with the governor making valuable contributions to support the management strategies of the SENCo. There is a senior learning support assistant who plays an important role in the management of LSAs. She is a motivator and is very well used by the LSAs as a critical friend. Her understanding of the needs of all the students withdrawn to the base is very good. The college principal is the senior manager responsible for special needs, and he is well informed by both the governor and the SENCo. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for taking the special needs provision forward. However, the current development plan is over-ambitious. Longer term planning and a prioritising of targets into a current development plan are needed to ensure that the essential foundations are laid for developing the special needs facility. There are very good procedures in place for identifying and evaluating the special education needs of students. These are well recorded and used to move students through the various stages toward statementing. Individual education plans are in place and in most cases are clear and measurable. There is a technical difficulty with information technology at present which prevents the use of software such as 'Success Maker' being used within the base.
- 106 The accommodation is very good and provides plenty of space for groups as well as one-to-one teaching. Resources are adequate for developing literacy, although there is a lack of non-fiction reference materials in the base library, and limited games and activities for developing basic and the more advanced skills of reading.
- 107 Since the previous inspection when it was identified as a key issue for action, the college has reviewed the provision and the level and nature of support for students with special educational needs. After an initially slow start, good progress is now being made towards improvement. Good progress has been made following the appointment in September of the current SENCo who has worked very hard to put improvements quickly into place. Learning support assistants are well directed and in most cases give very high quality support to their students. There is now a very effective system in place for withdrawing students from classes for the help they require, particularly in acquiring literacy skills. There are concerns that, despite the efforts of the college, there is a failure to meet the requirements of some statements. Some require speech therapy, which is not being provided. Concern about this has been expressed in writing as part of the medical advice given in statement reviews.
- 108 To build on the foundations established, and improve further, the college should ensure that:
- the small number of students who do not study a modern foreign language are disapplied;
 - speech therapy identified in statements of special educational needs is provided;

- all statements are reviewed within the calendar year;
- the quality of hour long one-to-one lessons is improved or sessions shortened.

Community education links

- 109 The college makes good provision for community and adult use, encouraging a view among students that it is a place of life long learning. Despite the reduction in the provision since the last inspection, the partnership between the County Council and the Further Education Funding Council continues to effectively support the provision. The college continues to offer a wide range of education opportunities to the community. Senior managers monitor the teaching within the community provision. The jointly provided sports facilities enjoy a high level of use by the college, other schools and the community alike. The resources provided through the community programme ensure that facilities such as these, which are not often found in a school of this size, are available for students' use. The presence on site of mature learners during the day and the provision of a crèche promotes well the image of learning as life long.
- 110 The Rutland Youth Service has been successful in promoting a positive attitude to the college especially through its work with disaffected youngsters. The sympathetic reception given to those students and the strong link between the Youth Service and the college have succeeded in providing further positive opportunities for continued education and social contacts.
- 111 After school care is provided at the college for younger students, and the provision is extended to students of primary age. Not only does this provide a secure learning environment for students, it also enables different age groups to socialise together, and allows younger children to become familiar with the college. The college continues to provide good elements of support for adult learners including the crèche and education guidance service, and has exciting plans to develop nursery provision using community buildings not currently used.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	157
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8%	21%	32%	31%	5%	3%	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 students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	665	
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	55	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	26	
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	139	

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	2

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	6.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	73 [64]	64 [71]	137[135]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44 [29]	57 [54]	54 [48]
	Girls	54 [46]	41 [53]	39 [43]
	Total	98 [75]	98 [107]	93 [91]
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	72 [56]	72 [80]	68 [67]
	National	63 [65]	62 [60]	55 [56]
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	20 [38]	42 [50]	28 [34]
	National	28 [35]	38 [36]	23 [27]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49 [40]	58 [52]	59 [55]
	Girls	54 [54]	41 [47]	48 [57]
	Total	103 [94]	99 [99]	107[112]
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	75 [70]	72 [73]	78 [83]
	National	64 [62]	64 [64]	60 [62]
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	31 [36]	45 [43]	48 [53]
	National	31 [31]	37 [37]	28 [31]

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	61 [84]	69 [75]	130[159]

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	37 [27]	60 [73]	60 [80]
	Girls	46 [31]	66 [73]	67 [74]
	Total	83 [58]	126 [146]	127 [154]
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	64 [36.5]	97 [91.8]	95.7 [97]
	National	46.3 [44.6]	90.7 [89.8]	95.7 [93]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	47 [37.3]
	National	37.8 [36.8]

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	663
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	39	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.4 : 1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	449

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	20.8
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Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	1,876,367
Total expenditure	1,979,474
Expenditure per student	3089
Balance brought forward from previous year	29,908
Balance carried forward to next year	- 73,199

Key Stage 4	20
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Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

665

Number of questionnaires returned

90

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	51	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	58	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	70	9	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	58	22	3	1
The teaching is good.	31	60	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	58	14	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	44	4	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	50	6	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	18	56	22	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	19	68	9	2	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	62	6	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	56	10	2	13

Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' meeting which 20 parents attended, and in letters sent to the registered inspector, the following concerns were expressed by a small number of parents:

- concerns about the homework timetable that did not help students organise work; the quality of some homework set and the variability in use of homework diaries;
- insufficient information for parents about the progress made by their child, including reports and arrangements for parents' evenings;
- the quality of some of the teaching and marking of work, especially in science;
- provision for extra-curricular sports.

The great majority of parents expressed appreciation for the hard work of teachers, and support for the work of the college.

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

ENGLISH

- 112 On balance, students enter the college with above average standards in English; but a significant minority has problems with basic literacy. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999 was above national expectations for students achieving Level 5+, but was below average at higher levels. The results were well below those of similar schools. Through effective identification and focus on students attaining within Levels 4 and 5, last year the proportion of students reaching Level 5+ was raised from previous years to well above national averages. In response to test results last year, the potential Level 6+ students have been targeted with a view to improved performance in the tests in 2000. Teacher assessments in 1999 were similar to test results, with just above average performance at Level 5+ and just below the national average at Level 6+. The target for this year, to attain above average higher levels, is realistic.
- 113 In both GCSE English and English Literature in 1999, students achieved well above the national average at A*-C and A*-G grades. A high proportion of students were entered for the examinations, and all succeeded in gaining a pass at A*-G levels. Boys achieved especially well compared to boys nationally. A small number of students for whom GCSE is unsuitable is successfully entered for the Certificate of Achievement. In 1999, GCSE drama entries were made for a second year, and results fell well below national averages. This dip in results appears to be linked to the third element of the examination, and the faculty is focusing on this element in 2000. Work seen in lessons is of a good standard.
- 114 Standards of literacy when students enter the college are, for the majority, above average. A significant minority has problems with basic accuracy in reading and writing, as increasing numbers of students with special educational needs are admitted to the college. Basic literacy advances well over Key Stage 3, through suitably modified teaching and learning approaches, and good in-class support for students with special needs. The majority of students develop higher order skills in written work, and students' extended writing grows in confidence, quality and accuracy between the ages of 11 and 14. Reading is improved effectively, as are skills for accessing texts. Speaking and listening skills are developed well through emphasis on collaborative group work and drama lessons. Progress is maintained up to age 16 and the very good proportion of A*-G grades achieved by the majority of the students is a measure of the success in helping students with special needs. The rate of progress made between when students enter the college and when they leave is better for most than might be expected, so considerable value is added by the faculty.
- 115 In the vast majority of lessons, students demonstrate very positive attitudes, and frequently show interest and enjoyment. Students appreciate opportunities to work in groups and the emphasis on oral work. In drama, Key Stage 3 students are enthusiastic improvisers, and Key Stage 4 students produce thoughtful and effective work. Course work is generally well presented and improves as students get older. Students show readiness to answer questions, to read aloud in class and to share their work with each other. They stay on task, and persevere at solving problems. Students listen to and appreciate the work of others. In most classes behaviour is very good, and teachers cope well with some challenging students. Where behaviour

falls below expectation, it is mainly associated with students, often boys, who have identified special needs behavioural problems. Skilled management by teachers deals effectively with such incidents, but it can disrupt the learning of the group significantly. Relationships are very good between students, and between staff and students. Through group activities, sharing of work, emphasis on independence and the valuing of personal response, both English and drama make an important contribution to the students' personal development and growth in confidence.

- 116 The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Teaching in all English and drama lessons is at least sound, with the majority of lessons good and better. The team has good specialist strengths. Lesson planning is good, with teachers developing a range of activities to make learning interesting. Expectations of behaviour are high and this contributes significantly to the skilful management of difficult students with identified behavioural problems. In the past, expectations of the more able, particularly at Key Stage 3, have been too low. However, this is now a priority which the faculty and lessons for students in upper sets are beginning to address this well. Teaching methods are very effective, with emphasis placed on collaborative group work, seminar approaches, use of role-play and brainstorming techniques. The more able are beginning to be better challenged, for example through the development of student conducted class seminar approaches such as in a Year 11 lesson where students took responsibility for teaching a section from *Of Mice and Men*. Activities and tasks are often creative and provide scope for individual responses, which are frequently of high quality. For example, in a Year 9 lesson groups gave highly original presentations on love, hate and fate using quotations from *Romeo and Juliet*. Time is used well to inject pace into activities and promote learning. Learning resources are of a good standard, and used effectively. Information and communication technology is increasingly used to present work, particularly by less able students and by older students for GCSE course work. It is also used well for research. For example, in a Year 11 lesson students explored the Bermuda Triangle web sites for information to support their English essays, and to provide material for their presentations. Good quality special needs support, combined with effective liaison with the English teachers, contributes significantly to improvements in students' basic skills. The quality of marking and assessment used consistently within the faculty is a strength. As well as encouraging and praising students' work, developmental comment on written work provides students with a clear idea of what they need to do to improve. Assessment is standardised through effective agreement sessions, and the data collected is used well for monitoring and mentoring students requiring special support. Homework is set and marked appropriately. In drama, teachers encourage students to develop critical appreciation of their own work and the work of others.
- 117 The head of faculty provides very effective and enthusiastic leadership to the team and the faculty is well managed. There is clarity about the targets for improvement, and a good team spirit is developing. Good monitoring and support procedures are in place. Schemes of work are being reviewed effectively to ensure good coverage of literacy. The faculty is well equipped with resources for information technology, and this is used increasingly well. The faculty offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including theatre trips, drama clubs and college productions, visiting writers from a range of backgrounds and cultures, and performance artists. Parents are involved well, through supporting paired reading and by being invited to join some theatre trips. When the students were reading *Carrie's War*, a parent came into the college to talk about experiences of being an evacuee.
- 118 Since the last inspection, the faculty has maintained standards above national

expectations and teaching remains a strength. There has been progress in the quality of speaking and listening at Key Stage 3 from sound to good standards. Schemes of work are improved.

- 119 To improve further, the faculty should:
- raise standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 tests, with specific reference to level 6+ through increased focus on teaching and learning which challenges students who are talented and gifted;
 - raise attainment in drama in GCSE grades A*-C;
 - make provision for spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development more explicit within the aims of the faculty, and by identifying opportunities for promoting these aspects within the schemes of work.

MATHEMATICS

- 120 Students at the college receive a very good mathematics education and most make rapid progress. It prepares them well for the next stages of education. Many obtain high levels of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding, together with an appreciation of the power and wonder of the subject.
- 121 In Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999, the proportion of students attaining Level 5+ and Level 6+ was above national expectations in relation to all schools. Teacher assessments were similar, and indicate how well staff know student capabilities. However, compared to similar schools, attainment was well below that expected. To some extent, this is the result of too few students being entered for tests at the highest level. In the current Year 9, the improved use of target levels during the year is ensuring a better match with the test requirements. In GCSE examinations in 1999, the percentage of students gaining higher A*-C results was well above the national average and, for A*-G results, was above the national average. The college has consistently obtained above average standards over the past few years despite some minor fluctuations.
- 122 Students enter the college with above average attainment in mathematics. Attainment in the required areas of work is above average throughout the college. In both key stages, most students can spot patterns, use simple algebra to describe specialisations, and write up the results using precise mathematical language. By age 14, in number and algebra, students can manipulate fractions and decimals and compute equivalences. Calculators are used effectively to check on results and enable powerful calculations to be tackled with confidence. Many students can use the probability scale, and determine the variation in chance with different games, including those with an element of bias. High and middle attaining students are particularly adept at using the coordinate system to enlarge or reduce two-dimensional shapes. Information technology is very well used in mathematics lessons. Students are able to display their results using the graphing power of spreadsheet software.
- 123 By age 16, these skills and knowledge are considerably enhanced, especially with middle and high attaining students, although the calculations of speed are not always correct. Graph work is especially well developed, and effectively displayed using computer software. Many students are good at solving both simple and simultaneous equations, using both algebraic manipulation and graph techniques. High attaining students are competent in solving quadratic equations and, when using formulae for the mensuration of solid shapes, can use dimension theory to ensure correct form.

Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout both key stages.

- 124 Numeracy across the college is good, although currently there is no whole college numeracy policy. However, in a number of subjects, students are able to apply numeracy skills well. The mathematics department has good knowledge of the National Numeracy Framework through link visits to primary feeder schools and is beginning to align its curriculum to ensure compatibility.
- 125 The attitudes of students towards mathematics are good. The majority of students, especially older students, can talk enthusiastically about the subject. They know what they want to achieve in examinations and what is required for further study after they leave the college. They are determined to achieve their target grades. Most regularly commit time to homework and many attend lunchtime and after college revision clubs.
- 126 Teaching in mathematics lessons is good and so is learning by students. Teaching and learning in almost all lessons is at least good, and in half of lessons taught are very good. Where teaching is at this high level, there is expert subject knowledge and meticulous planning of lessons so that students know precisely what they have to do. They are encouraged to think mathematically and express these thoughts in writing. Progress in learning in these lessons is often exceptional. Teachers plan a variety of activities, including the use of calculators and computers, and students often work collaboratively to find solutions to problems. Relationships are excellent and humour is sensitively and effectively used to promote interest and sustain concentration. There are very high expectations of both behaviour and mathematical precision. Linguistic and symbolic accuracy are prized and sought after by both teacher and students. In a very good lesson, a Year 7 class was investigating card and dice games that involved a challenging look at probability. The teacher placed playing cards in sequence from one suite, 'diamonds', asking if the next card was 'higher' or 'lower'. After a few minutes, when the excitement was intense, the teacher began to use precise mathematical questioning in order to establish the actual probability change as successive cards were placed. The students quickly used fractions in the context of the cards and began to realise the changing odds as the cards were used. A dice game followed, with students calculating successive changes of the probability of winning. The lesson ended with the homework task for each student to construct a biased dice to use in the next lesson to see how the odds changed in the game. Students were very well motivated by the teaching and they learned to understand the complex mathematical concept that the teacher had intended. However, in a few lessons where there are weaker features, the pace of work slows, tasks set are undemanding, slower progress is made and students learn much less.
- 127 Both leadership and management of the subject are very good. The rigorous analysis of examination results, and assessment procedures of exceptional quality, are put to very effective use in monitoring the progress of students, especially in Key Stage 4. Students know their target and expected grades at GCSE. Teachers effectively use this information in lesson planning. Reports for parents, however, are insufficiently clear on students' progress. Displays of students' work and commercial posters help make very good accommodation into a lively and thought provoking environment for teaching and learning.
- 128 Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good. Standards have risen and continue to rise, Assessment is used much more precisely to monitor student

performance. Management and leadership are effectively focussed on raising achievement.

129 To improve further, the department should:

- sustain the vigorous approach to raising attainment with all students;
- improve the student involvement in their work by making the immediate and longer term targets more obvious to them;
- improve the range of teaching approaches used in all classrooms by implementing the existing department guidelines.

SCIENCE

130 Although students continue to achieve above average levels of attainment in science, there are wider variations in the quality of teaching and greater inconsistencies in applying strategies for improvement than in other subjects. This prevents higher attainment, and girls particularly underachieve.

131 Results in Key Stage 3 national tests for 14 year olds in 1999 were above the national average for students attaining Level 5 and above, and were broadly in line with standards found in similar schools. The percentage of students obtaining Level 6 and above was slightly above national averages but below that of similar schools. Teacher assessments were close to and slightly above test results. Results in GCSE for 16 year olds improved considerably in 1999 to being well above the national average from well below average in 1998. The trend in results since the last inspection in Key Stage 3 has been a slight decline and in GCSE, although inconsistent and fluctuating, similar to previous results. In both tests and examinations boys achieve markedly better results than girls.

132 Students enter the college with above average attainment in science. By age 14, the attainment of current students is at and above national expectations. Their scientific knowledge and understanding is sound. Practical skills are relatively well developed although some students lack confidence. They can describe a fair test and most can carry one out. Higher attaining students are not always maximising their capabilities to use existing and new knowledge to test more complex ideas and interrogate data.

133 At age 16, attainment is in line with and sometimes above national expectations. Students can explain key scientific concepts such as enzyme reactions, and the role of gravitational attraction on the motion of objects, including planetary movement. Students can use scientific ideas and predict experimental outcomes with a level of accuracy appropriate for their age. Inconsistency between teachers restricts higher levels of student achievement, and high standards are not reached often enough. Expectations are not always set sufficiently high, so in some lessons students are not offered enough challenge in their work and therefore in these lessons are only able to develop limited breadth of understanding of scientific concepts to inform their predictions.

134 The subject contributes soundly to students' literacy and numeracy skills. Sound use is made of specialist key words especially in biology and some chemistry teaching. For example, topic maps are used as display material to reinforce spelling of technical vocabulary. On occasions, some students in Key Stage 4 demonstrate good levels of attainment in their use of data to explain patterns and draw accurate

line graphs. Occasionally students use and apply information technology to collect data and produce graphs of their results, for example when involved in an insulation investigation, but this is not a regular feature of students' work.

- 135 There is some good and very good teaching in both key stages, which engages students' interest so they achieve good results. However, there are too many unsatisfactory and poor lessons, and teaching overall is unsatisfactory because it lacks consistency and rigour. During their time at the college, most students will experience both good and unsatisfactory teaching. The good and very good lessons maintain standards. In good or very good lessons, when students are set clear and challenging objectives including appropriate targets and are expected to succeed, they learn well, gain knowledge and make swift progress. Activities are well matched to students' capabilities and interests. In a particularly effective Year 9 lesson, students carried out an extended investigation comparing the densities of different materials and discussed the implications in relation to the materials used and product design. The teacher had good knowledge of the subject and the investigative process and exposition were made clear. In-depth questioning tested students' knowledge and understanding. Well-practised procedures and articulate discussions challenged students' breadth and depth of knowledge, and ensured good progress. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor and progress slows, planning lacks precision, and does not match students' differing prior attainment. As a result, work lacks challenge and stimulation for more capable students, and is confusing and demotivating especially for girls and for lower attaining students. In one unsatisfactory Year 9 lesson, the teacher talked for far too long, with infrequent questioning of students. Poorly planned activities provided little challenge or motivation for most students. This slowed progress and many learning opportunities were missed. Students make considerable efforts to concentrate, ask questions and complete tasks, even when teaching is weak. They use texts and supplementary resources at home and at college to investigate topics further. For example, a Year 10 group completed an extensive piece of research for homework on the composition of blood. Marking of books is inconsistently completed by different teachers. Comments often lack clear diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses, and offer students little specific guidance on how to improve their work.
- 136 Assessment and attainment data are now routinely collected and analysed, providing a rich source of information to gauge the progress of the department and the students. In some lessons this information is used very well to confirm students' progress and give advice on how to improve further. However, the data is not used consistently by all members of the department to inform student progress, or to fully evaluate teaching and curriculum organisation for all classes and students.
- 137 Following external advice, the department took appropriate action to raise GCSE standards in 1999 to good effect, by introducing supplementary teaching sessions and revision and by using support materials. However, day to day and longer term routines to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning, marking and target setting have not been securely established, resulting in a lack of rigour and consistency in some aspects of the department's work. This weakens the basis for maintaining and improving standards. Schemes of work are not fully developed to provide guidance in planning lessons effectively, or to broaden and enrich the science curriculum.
- 138 Health and safety management has some deficiencies. Rigorous risk assessments of all the department's work, with outcomes clearly identified in subject documentation such as schemes of work, have not been carried out. Accommodation, although in need of some refurbishment and additional storage space, is not all used effectively,

as a number of areas and laboratories are cluttered and, in contrast to the rest of the college, appear uncared for. Very good displays in some areas of the science department give a sense of care and value for the subject and are used effectively by teachers as a learning resource and to celebrate students' successes. This is not a feature of all the science laboratories.

- 139 On occasions, teachers' preparation time is restricted due to insufficient technician time being available to service all laboratories effectively. Resources are adequate but the department lacks a wide range of diverse, rich and varied selection of colourful texts, visual aids and journals to develop fully students' learning skills. Information and communications technology, to enhance students' learning of science, is underused.
- 140 Since the last inspection, attainment and standards have been maintained at similar levels, although girls' performance has deteriorated. Investigative skills remain sound and information and communication technology skills are still not sufficiently developed.
- 141 To improve further, greater consistency needs to be established between the good and very good practice found in the subject and those areas where it is currently unsatisfactory. To do this the college should:
- establish the rigour found in other subjects in monitoring, planning and resource management;
 - improve unsatisfactory teaching to sound or better levels;
 - raise the attainment of gifted and talented students and that of girls.

ART

- 142 Art makes a significant contribution to the values and ethos of the college. Together with the high level of success enjoyed by students, this justifies the status of art as an entitlement for all, and the aspirations of the college for specialist visual arts status.
- 143 Teacher assessments in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 show the majority of students working beyond the expectation of the national curriculum. In GCSE examinations in 1999, 82.4% students gain higher A*-C grades which was well above the national average of 61.2%. A continuous trend of improvement enables boys and girls to perform very well in comparison to schools nationally and in relation to other subjects within the college.
- 144 By age 14, the strengths of students' work are particularly evident in their sketchbooks. Investigative work with different materials demonstrates their ability to observe, record and interpret their environment. Work inspired by images of water in the swimming pool is an example. Where curriculum organisation enables students to apply their skills in two-dimensional art to other areas, work is most effective. For example, a Year 9 group was observed applying their drawings and designs of 'water' to clay. This promoted the careful use of cutting, incising, forming and joining skills. Students make art creatively and carefully where a purpose is clear. The fashion show, for example, is seen as an inspiration for textiles. Students' ability to analyse, evaluate and make connections to the work of artists, craftworkers and designers is variable, and is dependent upon the quality of criteria and appropriateness of resources to which students are directed.
- 145 By age 16, particular strengths are apparent in each of the art options. Drawing and

painting is very well observed and skilfully executed. The '*Illustration*' project demonstrates students' ability to apply imagination. Good analysis of artists' work is evident in that evolving from gallery visits, where students transpose themselves into a picture. A variety of stimuli are recorded with care regularly in sketchbooks. Imaginative ideas are developed in three-dimensional studies, resulting in a high level of personal expression. The tableware café project, for example, inspired a Year 11 student to make a full-size papier mâché '*desert island*' dining table for '*pirate*' inspired ceramics. Students refine ideas by effectively handling materials. Work in textiles is very well crafted and students are able to use machine and hand skills to apply visually creative ideas for real contexts. For example, a Year 11 student creating a costume for the local drama production, stitching a circuit of lights into the design. Work produced for the fashion show exemplifies very high levels of skill in fashion construction and embellishment. Analytical drawing skills are less consistently developed. Students' ability to use their knowledge and understanding of artists' working in related media is variable, and offers greater potential than used at present to impact upon students' exploration and experimentation with media.

- 146 Students show very positive attitudes towards their experiences and options in art. A significantly high number continue work in the studio beyond lesson time, and respond responsibly to the requirement for continued work at home on an independent basis. A range of Year 8 animal masks in response to a visit to Twycross Zoo exemplified the positive support of parents in helping students use found materials effectively. Students enjoy the individual interest and care shown in them by teachers of the subject. Very good behaviour is consistent. Relationships are co-operative and mutually trusting. Attitudes towards displays, artefacts, and resources are respectful. A significantly high number of students continue their personal and professional development through art, and students have progressed to a range of art and design related courses and careers including graphic design, fashion design, art teaching, and computer aided design.
- 147 All teaching in the subject is satisfactory or better, and the majority of lessons are very good. The teachers of art reflect their own enjoyment and interest in the subject and faith in the ability of young artists. This results in lessons where students make good and very good progress and learn well. The most effective teaching is characterised by thorough preparation. Carefully constructed portfolios of related artists' work alongside other students' work is a successful approach used. For example, a Year 10 lesson on portraiture used David Hockney's work juxtaposed with that of Picasso, together with drawings by past students, to enable students to understand the concept of the observant eye as viewfinder capable of recording more than one view. The sharing of students' work to review and refine ideas and to consolidate learning is used skilfully by all teachers of art. For example, a Year 9 ceramics appraisal concentrated on the difference between the work of individual students in response to the same starting point. During lessons, teachers use the successes and mistakes of the few as a learning opportunity for all very well. Display is used effectively to set high expectations; for example, displays of work in the textiles studio are specifically related to current projects enabling students to aim high. In all studios, key words are displayed to promote specialist language.
- 148 The basis of the department's success is the sensitive, modest and conscientious leadership by example of the head of department, which is quietly ambitious for the students. This has created a well managed department, with a productive, co-operative and self-critical teaching team actively supported by the senior managers, governors, support staff and local business sponsorship. The very good subject development plan shows how well aware the team is of college, local and national

standards and priorities for promoting further improvement.

- 149 Students experience a wide range of learning opportunities at Key Stage 3, which provides a good basis for specialisation at Key Stage 4. Students' response to visits and visitors is very good; for example, visits made by Year 10 students to London galleries, and visits to the college by artists including a local book illustrator, a ceramicist and a fashion designer to share their work. The 'Arts Alive' festival demonstrates an active and sustained opportunity for effective learning, of which the developing sculpture courtyard is a positive outcome. The Oakham station mural and the printed tea towels illustrated by students' drawings of local gargoyles are further examples of how well students respond to a real context and maximise on their local environment. An awareness of multicultural contexts is gained through specific curriculum planning, such as the Year 9 textiles and collages of masks and totem poles inspired by Native American Art. A weaker area of provision is that the key art objective related to the visual or tactile concept developed in a particular lesson or project is not always clearly identified in planning or practice. As a consequence, although assessment of students is frequent and feedback is helpful, it is unspecific. A match between the main objectives of the national curriculum and GCSE, with assessment criteria, is not apparent. However, the individual reports given to students at Key Stage 4 after each project enable students to learn how to improve.
- 150 Improvement since the previous inspection has been effective and provides a firm basis for further growth. Improvements in the quality of 3D work in direct response to the previous inspection has contributed to greater consistency of attainment.
- 151 To improve still further, the department should maintain the high level of success for large numbers of students while:
- increasing experimentation and creative diversity;
 - strengthening the connections between knowledge and understanding of artists, and work in all material areas;
 - making links between media areas in relation to drawing skills, art concepts, themes and key skills where appropriate;
 - relating teacher and self-assessments to specific objectives.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 152 In recent years, the attainment of students in design and technology has been low when compared with their performance in other subjects within the college. However, staff changes in the department are beginning to make a positive impact on both students' attitude towards the subject and the quality of the work being produced.
- 153 Recent statutory teacher assessments for the attainment of 14 year olds have been well below those recorded nationally at Level 5 and above. At age 16, students' results in the GCSE examinations in the design subjects over the last three years have been consistently below the national average, with comparatively higher results in food and graphic products than in resistant materials and systems and control.
- 154 At age 14, the attainment of current students is below average. From ages 11 to 14,

students are now making sound progress overall, developing a foundation of basic knowledge, skills and understanding within food, graphics, resistant materials and systems and control. When designing, students use design briefs, undertake research and generate their own ideas, using a range of different drawing techniques. For example in Year 9, they develop competent pencil and crayon techniques making observational drawings of different packaging to inform their own designs. In making activities, students use a range of tools and equipment with increasing confidence. For example in Year 8, they are able to measure, mark out and cut simple forms using hand and machine processes with appropriate accuracy when making decorative boxes. Attainment is below average at this age because, between Years 7 and 9, students have had insufficient time to develop their designing and making skills to the breadth and depth required to enable them to reach the higher national curriculum levels.

- 155 From ages 14 to 16, students continue to make sound progress overall, developing their designing and making skills in one of the media areas studied earlier. At age 16, the attainment of current students remains below average. In Year 10, students' coursework demonstrates a suitable range of designing and making skills, matched closely to the GCSE examination requirements. In food, for example, students practise a range of different methods of making cakes and biscuits before designing and making food for children. In resistant materials, students undertake detailed research into different designers and artists to use as the stimulus for their designs of picture frames. In Year 11, however, the GCSE coursework of a significant number of students does not demonstrate the range or the depth of work required by the examination syllabus. In resistant materials and systems and control, students have not researched, developed or modelled their ideas in sufficient depth before starting on their practical projects. In food and graphic products, students' work is a better match with the coursework requirements. In food for example, their folders provide a sound record of research and practical experimentation related to a range of relevant projects.
- 156 Students respond well and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. Standards of behaviour are nearly always good. Students work well together and relationships between students and their teachers, and the technician, are good. Students use the equipment carefully and responsibly, with due regard to safe working practices. There are few opportunities within lessons for students to engage in class discussions in which they are required to talk about their own work, or that of others, or to listen to the views of others. From ages 11 to 14, students have limited opportunities within the time available to work independently; for example, to undertake individual research and investigation to inform their designs. However, from ages 14 to 16, GCSE coursework provides good opportunities for students to take more responsibility for their own learning. For example, they write letters to companies, and design questionnaires to consider the views of others.
- 157 The quality of teaching overall is sound, and some lessons are good, but a few lessons are unsatisfactory. Teachers demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of the subject, and have planned a suitable range of projects matched to the national curriculum. Teachers give brief introductions to lessons to set the context for the session. They do not, however, share learning targets with students to clarify their expectations for lessons or, at the end of lessons, discuss the learning that has taken place to assess the progress students have made. Teachers provide appropriate help and support by circulating around their groups. However, few opportunities are taken to demonstrate skills to raise the standard of students' designing and making. For example in a Year 9 graphics lesson, students developing

rendering skills were left too long without intervention by the teacher to show them how they could improve their work. When teaching is more challenging, students show a greater interest and work more productively. For example, in a Year 10 graphics lesson on packaging perfumes, students concentrated well on the tasks set, analysing the characteristics of different perfume bottles and packaging, and discussed their results in groups before sharing them with the whole class. Teachers generally manage their groups well. However, in the Year 11 groups in resistant materials, and systems and control, the range of projects is too broad and teachers are unable to provide individuals with sufficient help and support to enable them to make satisfactory progress within the lessons. Suitable assessment schemes are in place to record attainment at the end of each unit of work, but the assessment of students' work during the designing and making of projects is not coordinated across the department. Where used well, for example in Year 11 food technology and graphic products, students have a clear idea of the progress they are making.

- 158 The recently appointed head of department is providing clear leadership and management of the design and technology team. This is evident in the quality of the new schemes of work, the development plan priorities, the reorganisation of the facilities and the relationships that exist between staff and students.
- 159 Since the previous report, overall levels of attainment at age 16 remain below average, and there is still considerable variation in the attainment of students across the different GCSE courses. Standards are beginning to rise where teaching is sound or better. In order to raise standards further, the college should:
- review the time allocated to design and technology in all years;
 - strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across the department and raise the quality of unsatisfactory teaching found in a small number of lessons to sound or better levels;
 - explore ways in which the department can provide students with exemplars of good practice;
 - address the health and safety issues identified to the college relating to machinery in the resistant materials areas.

GEOGRAPHY

- 160 This is a good department, which offers a broad curriculum experience to all students and a very good quality of teaching. Students achieve sound standards in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- 161 Attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with that found nationally, as shown by the 1999 unmoderated teacher assessments. The attainment of boys was better than that of girls. Observation and scrutiny of work show current attainment to be slightly better, although there is less evidence of work at the higher levels of the national curriculum. Attainment at GCSE, where 52.5% of students gained grades A*-C, is in line with national averages. The higher grades are under-represented. Boys' attainment was lower than the girls', both overall and at the higher grades. Current attainment is slightly higher and there are fewer differences between boys and girls.
- 162 By Year 9, students have a sound knowledge of locations and are acquiring a working geographical vocabulary. They show a good understanding of geographical patterns and processes, as in their work on farming systems and coastal features. Effective

use is made of case studies to help students develop detailed knowledge and understanding of how people live in different places. Work comparing life in north and south Nigeria, and the impact of the discovery of oil on the economy and environment, leads to some good descriptive extended writing and the beginnings of explanation. Students can gather information from field observations and a range of texts and surveys, and some are beginning to use information technology. They present their findings well. Their work shows they have well-developed graphicacy skills. Maps and climate graphs are accurately drawn, and the precise annotations to three-dimensional diagrams show good understanding of the processes involved in shaping the landscape. Students have too few opportunities to develop their skills in increasingly independent enquiry work. Overall there is limited evidence of the analytical and explanatory approaches to ideas and issues needed to secure the higher levels of the national curriculum. All students are making sound progress in acquiring and consolidating their knowledge, skills and understanding. Lower attaining students, including those with special needs, are making good progress

- 163 Towards the end of Year 11, students are achieving standards similar to and slightly above those seen in similar schools. They show good locational knowledge. They use language well and show a good use of geographical terminology, as in their naming of different types of cloud. They show sound knowledge and understanding of geographical processes; for example, in their work identifying the changing weather associated with the passage of a depression, or when offering reasons for land use variation and change within a town. Many students have developed a good level of graph work, including scatter graphs showing trends, relationships and correlations. They research and present information well, writing good accounts of coastal fieldwork, and summaries of their investigations of housing and accident patterns in Oakham. This work shows students are proficient in a range of skills, including building a data base and the use of spreadsheets. However, there is less evidence of the analysis of geographical information, and course work needs to encourage more reasoning, explanation and analysis. All students, including those with special needs, are making sound progress.
- 164 Students' response to learning is very good. In all lessons, students show good levels of interest and concentration and work productively on task. There is an atmosphere of learning in all classes. There are good relationships between teacher and students. Students work well with each other, as in the group discussion of photographs in Year 9, where students listened well to what each had to say, and worked as a group to produce an agreed summary. In all year groups students show some initiative in response to survey homework and fieldwork, but in Key Stage 3 they have few opportunities for independent structured enquiry work. Course work for GCSE shows some initiative and much care in presentation.
- 165 Teaching in all the lessons is either good, very good or excellent. Students learn well in geography lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned, managed and organised. They have clear point and purpose. Teachers help students to learn by structuring lessons well, using a variety of interesting resources and activities that build towards a clear outcome. They pay much attention to the precise and accurate use of language in any context, which is helped by good vocabulary lists displayed on classroom walls. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson, the teacher used detailed diagrams and weather recording equipment effectively to consolidate previous learning by requiring students to explain the basis of measurements, using precise and scientific language. In a very good Year 9 lesson on ecosystems, groups discussed photographs of vegetation, sharing

words which described what they could see, and applying what they already knew to suggest influences and reasons why this was the case. In Year 11, a very good lesson on the weather focussed on a depression moving across the British Isles. The students learned basic principles of what was happening from the projected simplified maps and diagrams, and the whole class then attempted to predict the changing weather at particular places, before moving on to gain further knowledge from their detailed textbook diagrams. Where the teaching has weaker elements, there is a slower pace and insufficient matching of work to the needs of all students. For example, some basic graph exercises take up too much time in lessons, and in a Year 8 lesson on coasts, although the work was well pitched for the middle and lower attainers who learned much, the talented and gifted students were not sufficiently extended.

- 166 The department is well led and managed by an experienced teacher. There is good documentation to support the broad and balanced curriculum. Students' attainment is assessed accurately by tests and tasks, but students have too little understanding of the criteria by which their work is marked for individual targets to be set. There is good analysis of assessment data, which is used to identify departmental targets. The development plan is sound. Teachers' work is well monitored. Reports to parents do not contain enough information on subject specific attainment and the progress made by students. Teachers and students work in an attractive environment enhanced by good displays, and they have access to a good range of equipment and resources. There is insufficient use of information technology in the subject.
- 167 Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have been maintained at the national average. The quality of teaching has improved from sound to good. To improve further, the department should:
- offer more challenge to students by asking them to do more analytical work and developing their independent enquiry skills;
 - increase the use of information and communication technology in the subject;
 - help younger students to set individual subject-specific targets for improvement.

HISTORY

- 168 This is a good department, which offers all students a broad curriculum and a very good quality of teaching. Students achieve sound standards in Key Stage 3 and good standards in Key Stage 4.
- 169 In end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999, attainment was broadly in line with that found nationally. Boys' attainment was better than that of girls'. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show current attainment to be slightly better. Attainment at GCSE, where 63% of students gain grades A*-C, is above the national average. Both boys and girls achieve above their respective national averages, with boys' attainment particularly strong at grades A*-C, and at the higher grades.
- 170 By age 14, students have acquired a good knowledge and understanding of the events, people and situations studied, together with an appropriate historical vocabulary. They are able to place events within a chronological framework using timelines and historical conventions. They show a sound understanding of historical concepts such as cause and consequence, as in their work on the effects of the industrial revolution. They comprehend and use sources in a sound manner, as in the lesson where groups used six witness statements to help their mini drama about the execution of Charles I. When given research opportunities they can extract

information from a range of textbooks in class and in the library. They present this information well. Workbooks are well organised and most work is completed. A major strength in attainment is students' extended writing in response to such demanding questions as '*How great was the Great Reform Act?*' Extended writing begins in Year 7 with formal essay writing, and continues through the years, sometimes with support through writing frames. Students show good oral attainment, offering reasoned responses to teacher questioning, and they listen well. Although students comprehend sources they do not analyse them sufficiently in a rigorous way. There is limited evidence of student attainment in using sources to investigate different historical interpretations of events. All students including those with special needs are making sound and better progress. Good progress is made in written work in Year 9 by lower attaining students and students with special needs.

- 171 Towards the end of Year 11, students are achieving standards similar to and above those seen normally at this age. Over the two-year course students acquire a good level of knowledge and understanding. They show a good understanding of chronology through their work on timelines and a broad range of historical concepts, such as the causes of World War II, the effects of the Depression and who benefited from Nazi control. They show sound understanding of what different sources can tell an historian, although this work is better developed in Year 11 where it is related to course work. Students are developing good independent learning skills as they research material for a chosen Cold War hotspot. They continue to develop their extended writing capability, comparing Khrushchev with Stalin, or preparing a detailed case study of the Hungarian uprising. They show a good level of oral ability, particularly the boys who volunteer good information and argument. Some students have reached an appropriate level of explanatory thinking, but not all develop their higher order thinking skills. There is little evidence of students regularly using word processing, spreadsheets, or the Internet in their history work. All students, including those with special needs, are making good progress. Boys and talented students make particularly good progress.
- 172 Students' response to learning across the college is very good. There is an atmosphere of learning in all classes, and behaviour is very good. Younger students show much interest in and enthusiasm towards their work. Older students are engaged with the work and show much commitment. They show initiative and some independence of thought. Oral responses are thoughtful and extended. There are good relationships between teachers and students. Students work well in groups.
- 173 Teaching in lessons is always at least sound and in three-quarters is very good or excellent. Students learn well, gaining knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers show a high level of historical knowledge, and an understanding of how students learn. All the lessons are well planned and structured. For example, in a Year 11 class the teacher asked small groups of students to research Cold War conflict areas, either Vietnam, Cuba, or Korea. She provided a focus, a clear structure of supportive questions, and a range of revision texts, books and access to library information. She had high expectations of the class. The students rapidly gained an overview of their problem area and in a short time were well into a detailed understanding supported by key questions. In another lesson with a Year 7 mixed ability class, the teacher taught the students how to write a formal essay. With some enjoyment the students followed the step by step approach, each of which had a relevant associated activity. The work, when accompanied by helpful individual attention, was pitched to suit students of all abilities and much was learned. With a Year 9 lower attaining class studying the causes of World War 1, after a well organised historical vocabulary test, the teacher led students briefly through a

textbook page of background to the Europe of the time. The students then used the text to draw a tally chart of references to the main countries involved in order to understand the political friendships of the time. Not all lessons were as well matched to the different needs of students. For example, in a Year 8 class the teacher took the 'hot seat' to respond to good student questioning about King James. Although showing very good subject understanding, the teacher talked too much and did not ensure that all students, including the lower attainers, were fully involved. All the teaching gives much appropriate emphasis to the development of vocabulary, language and literacy skills.

- 174 The faculty and department teams are well led and managed by an able and enthusiastic practitioner. There is good documentation and schemes of work to underpin the broad and balanced curriculum, although the Key Stage 4 schemes consist only of the examination syllabus. Students' attainment is well assessed by tests and tasks, although students have too little understanding of how their work is assessed for them to be in a position to know how to improve. There is good analysis of assessment data, which is used to identify departmental targets. There is a sound development plan for improvement. Teachers work is well monitored. Reports to parents need to contain more about subject-specific attainment, and the progress made by students. Teachers and students work in an attractive environment enhanced by good displays and easy access to a good range of resources including the library.
- 175 Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved. Teaching is now predominantly good or very good with a wider range of teaching and learning activities used.
- 176 Action to promote further improvement should include :
- an increase in the opportunities for students to rigorously analyse sources and to develop higher order thinking skills;
 - enrichment of the curriculum by a programme of visits and visitors and the greater use of information and communication technologies;
 - help to younger students to set individual targets for improvement using subject-specific criteria.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 177 The College is very well equipped for information and communication technology studies and students taught specific lessons on information technology acquire a good range of competencies, but the development of information technology skills within subjects is unsatisfactory.
- 178 In end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessment tasks in 1999, attainment was very close to national expectations and had improved over recent years. However, standards of attainment for students overall at age 14 are below average, as insufficient time is spent learning information technology in other subjects, and students do not gain full competencies across all the skills needed. At age 16, a small but growing number of students are entered for the GCSE examination. In 1999, the results were below the national average. Only a small proportion obtained grades A*-C, but this was commendable for the first attempt at a complex and demanding course. However, for the great majority of students, attainment is well below average at age 16 as there is no taught course for this age group, and teaching within subjects is as unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 as it is in Key Stage 3.

- 179 At age 14, in the taught course, all students use word processing packages effectively with a high level of retrieval and editing skills. Most are able to import graphics into text files competently and be critical of layout implications. They use text wrap confidently, and know how to modify work for a variety of purposes. All students can use logo to create and transform shapes. They acquire good skills with spreadsheets and databases, but these are not extensively applied across the curriculum. All students can talk confidently about the effect computers are having on our changing society, and most have access to computers at home to reinforce skills learnt at college. Information technology courses do make a valuable contribution to developing students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- 180 By age 16, those students who choose to study the GCSE option in information and communication technology, make very good progress, often from variable levels of skill when they start the course. They learn how to use complex searches using databases and can apply effective checking routines with spreadsheets. They can apply these skills to real life situations and demonstrate critical skills of analysis for chosen software products. These are carried through into practical design and marketing applications. The Internet and e-mail are well used, both to download information and transfer important information between home and college. Several students are skilled at creating web pages. No other information technology courses are offered in Key Stage 4, and standards of attainment for other students are below average. Although a number of subjects do contribute well to students' information technology capability, there is unsatisfactory coverage of the required areas of study. In English, skills and competencies are well developed. Word processing is used effectively to enhance presentation of work, and students use the Internet well to resource and research English assignments as part of their course work tasks. Not all students, however, are skilled at deciding what criteria to apply in order to access the vast amount of information available. In mathematics, almost all students can use computers and calculators effectively to demonstrate the power of mathematical enquiry and presentation. Spreadsheets are used very well to show the results of investigation, both in analytical and graphical form. However the standards achieved across all curriculum subjects are very variable and often below average. In design and technology and science, there is very limited acquisition of skills in the use of control and sensing equipment, and attainment in this aspect is below average. In modern foreign languages, and religious education, the tasks set are often at a low level and present little challenge. Students with special educational needs make sound progress in information technology across both key stages.
- 181 Attitudes and behaviour are exceptional in almost all lessons in the taught courses. Students are voracious in their appetite for computer learning. Their skill level is often very high, and most know the capabilities and limitations of computers they use at home. Equipment is very well looked after, and students take a real pride in their growing competence. Motivation is very high, and almost all students show very good concentration. Relationships are excellent in almost all lessons.
- 182 Teaching and learning in the central taught courses are good. In Key Stage 3 they are good, and in the GCSE taught option they are very good. These examples of very good teaching and learning show the potential for success as not yet exploited across all curriculum areas. Students respond with enthusiasm and very good rates of progress. Where teaching and learning are at their best, the high challenge is managed effectively by skilful support to ensure students can work independently. Expert teaching knowledge is shared, so that skills are quickly gained and put into use. For instance, a Year 11 English class was asked to investigate, as part of their course work, '*Unexplained occurrences*'. Their brief was to research this topic using

the Internet and a range of other resources. The teacher emphasised a very good range of options but almost all used the Internet to obtain information. With support, students were able to download text and graphics into their work files. However, not all were confident in making decisions about what to accept and reject. Many planned to carry on the investigation and write up at home. Relationships in lessons are excellent. Social and personal skills are integrated into the lesson planning, and examination performance criteria are at the forefront of learning. A calm approach to teaching and learning creates an ethos of very good mutual respect, and acknowledges the stamina required especially for the GCSE course. Where there are weaker features, a few students are easily distracted from their work and progress is slow. Teaching and learning across other subjects of the curriculum are much more varied. Often tasks set are not sufficiently demanding, and teachers' planning does not incorporate detailed information on the information technology programmes of study or associated assessment procedures.

- 183 Leadership of the subject is very good. There is clear vision for the subject and good supporting documentation and development planning. There is a calm and collegiate ethos in the department and very good provision for lunchtime and after school clubs. These are well attended. The coordinator has other responsibilities within the college that limits the time available for whole college management, and the National Curriculum requirements for this subject are not being met. In Key Stage 3, although the central taught course meets national curriculum criteria, provision across the curriculum is not yet planned or assessed effectively. Students taking two modern foreign languages have only access to half the taught time in Years 7 and 9, and no access in Year 8. In Key Stage 4, provision for the great majority of students is unsatisfactory.
- 184 Resource provision is outstanding, with a ratio of computers to students considerably better than the national average. The quality of technical support is very good, but there is insufficient time allocated to maintain the existing hardware and software efficiently. A number of curriculum areas lack the appropriate software or equipment to deliver programmes of study.
- 185 Since the previous report in which the provision of information technology was identified as a key issue, taught curriculum time has been introduced in Key Stage 3, but this is insufficient for the great majority of students to ensure adequate coverage of the programmes of study. Detailed teaching schemes of work have not been produced in many subjects. In Key Stage 4, there are insufficient opportunities for all students to study information and communication technology in a coherent and comprehensive course. Progress since the previous report has been unsatisfactory.
- 186 To improve further and meet statutory requirements the college must:
- ensure that, at Key Stage 3, a detailed teaching scheme of work with assessment and moderation procedures is provided and taught in all curriculum areas, in line with National Curriculum 2000 proposals ;
 - ensure that at Key Stage 4, appropriate courses are provided for all students which cover the programmes of study, in line with National Curriculum 2000 proposals;
 - improve the coordination and management of a whole college approach to ensure all students receive their entitlement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

German and French

- 187 By the end of Year 9, the attainment of most students reaches standards that are within the range expected for this age group. Teacher assessments over the last two years indicate that no students have achieved higher National Curriculum levels. This profile is reflected in lessons, where students achieve average standards, but with a much higher degree of confidence and accuracy than is usual. They can write about familiar topics, they have a good grasp of the grammar they are taught and they speak with better than usual pronunciation. They demonstrate firm understanding of printed and recorded material about their current topic of work, however reading skills are not practised consistently or regularly enough during Key Stage 3 to develop the higher levels of expertise.
- 188 GCSE results in French have risen progressively over recent years, so that in 1999 the proportion of students attaining grades A*-C was comfortably above the national average. In the same period, German GCSE results have risen well above the national figure. Boys' A*-C results in both languages have risen above the national average, and significantly so in German. For students currently in Years 10 and 11, attainment in French is sound, and in German it is good. In Years 10 and 11, there are many examples of students using original, complex and extended language. Many students can give spoken presentations from memory, with a good standard of accuracy. Many students produce extended written compositions, which use a wide vocabulary and more complicated forms of language. In all but a few lessons, students behave very well. They work well in pairs and groups and display a consistently positive attitude to their studies.
- 189 Teaching in modern foreign languages is good overall, but with significant variations ranging between excellent and poor lessons. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, the majority of French teaching is sound, with an occasional excellent lesson, but in German, teaching is mainly good, very good or excellent. In the majority of lessons, students learn well and make good progress. All teachers have very good command of the language they are teaching, which they use intensively themselves, providing a model of good quality and effective communication. Where teaching is particularly effective, teachers interact with individual students to challenge and enthuse them which stimulates good learning. Whole class questioning is conducted briskly, generating speed, challenge and urgency. Grammar and its terminology are taught, so that students can generate their own language, make sense of what they read and hear, and meet the next stage of learning with confidence. In Key Stage 4 lessons, there is frequent use of criteria and scores linked to GCSE syllabus requirements, so that students always know what they are aiming for and how well they have performed. Assessment systems are good in both key stages, but in Key Stage 3, students do not have such a well developed sense of levels, criteria, and their own performance. In some otherwise successful lessons, too much time is spent listening to the teacher or other students in whole class question and answer sessions, so that students do not make enough active and personal use of the language they are studying. Also, some speaking activities are too loosely defined, and students do not know clearly enough what they are expected to do, how much they should produce, or what quality is expected. Where teaching is not fully effective, there is not enough dynamism in the presentation or management of activities to push work forward and to energise students, resulting in a tedious lesson. In a few instances the teacher does not effectively restrain or channel the energies of the more lively or challenging students, usually boys, so that misbehaviour begins.

- 190 The presence of a second modern foreign language, and of a degree of choice in the first language, offers students a clear benefit. The college has yet to resolve some curricular issues which stem from this provision, especially the lack of access to information technology teaching. The timetabling of double lessons reduces the effectiveness of languages learning. In Key Stage 4, the second language is sited within an option bank of very popular subjects, so that it is difficult to maintain group sizes.
- 191 Since the last inspection, modern foreign languages have undergone a very good and continuous process of improvement, with every indication that this will be sustained. This reflects the very good work of the head of faculty. She has identified strategies for improvement and has focused a cohesive team on their implementation. Comprehensive schemes of work are in place; the German programme for Key Stage 4 is particularly good. Under her leadership, GCSE results have risen steadily. The disparity between French and German results has closed. The profile and credibility of modern languages have improved. Boys have become progressively more successful.
- 192 In order to continue improvement, the faculty should:
- remodel Key Stage 3 schemes of work in order to:
 - address the criteria for higher National Curriculum levels;
 - set a target for the proportion of students who should reach that standard;
 - educate students about Key Stage 3 criteria for success, reflecting current practice in Key Stage 4;
 - practise reading skills systematically.
 - Identify and extend good practice within the faculty, with a view to eliminating the weaknesses in teaching which are specified in the report.

MUSIC

- 193 By the age of 14, attainment in music is above the national expectation. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of musical concepts such as scales, modes and chords. For example, students in Year 9 can talk about the patterns of tones and semitones that make up each of the different modes. They can perform a modal melody and chord sequence, and are able to confidently use the mode to compose their own musical phrases. They can talk about their work, demonstrating a good grasp of musical vocabulary. Performance skills are good. Students in Year 7 perform simple vocal percussive or scat phrases based on the theme of cats, with a secure sense of rhythm and style. They are able to perform their own parts securely within a large group and with good control of dynamics.
- 194 GCSE music results are well above national averages. Until 1998 GCSE, music was not offered in curriculum time. As a result, small numbers of students, mostly those having instrumental lessons, took the subject as an after-school activity. This situation has improved and music is now a curriculum subject open to all students aged 14 to 16. The majority of GCSE students are attaining above average standards in relation to the examination requirements. They have a good understanding of musical concepts such as scales, chords, rhythm and texture. Many of the students are able to talk about music using appropriate musical vocabulary; for example,

talking about melody and counter melody when comparing two versions of the same song. Students in Year 11 have very good performance skills. Their playing is often fluent, accurate and sensitive. Composition work is generally imaginative and demonstrates a good understanding of music in a range of styles. However, students' ability to use music technology for creating, recording and manipulating sounds is underdeveloped because of a lack of equipment.

- 195 Attitudes and behaviour in music lessons are very good. The students take a sense of pride in their performance; for example, when taping a whole class piece about cats to use in their drama lesson. They generally work together well in small groups and pairs. They talk about their compositions and how they can be improved and are keen to help one another practise new material.
- 196 The teaching of music is very good. Performing, composing, listening and appraising are effectively integrated and this enables the students to make very good progress in their learning. For example, students in Year 10 have been preparing their own small group performances of the song '*It Ain't Necessarily So*'. In one of the lessons observed they were asked to compare two versions of the song performed in different styles. Their knowledge and understanding of the piece was secure from performing it, and they were able to analyse the two versions confidently. Some of the students reflected upon the versions that they had listened to and modified their own performances effectively as a result. Teachers have a good understanding of how children learn. This understanding is used very well to present material in different ways in order to support individual learning styles. For example, in a Year 9 lesson the teacher asked the students to listen for a particular melody in a song by Sting and to analyse the structure of the piece. The teacher presented the material visually using notation, and aurally by playing the melody. She encouraged the students to talk about their learning. Assessment data is used very effectively to monitor the progress of individuals, particularly in examination groups. The students know their current attainment levels and their target grades and understand how to improve their composition and performance.
- 197 The leadership and management of music are both very good. The departmental monitoring policy is well documented and monitoring of the curriculum and teaching are a strength. The music department is committed to the development of music technology but resources for this are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient practice facilities available for music. There is a range of high quality extra-curricular musical activities which effectively cater for the needs and interests of the students. They include regular and high quality productions of musicals, such as 'Grease'.
- 198 The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. To improve still further:
- links between instrumental music teaching and class music lessons should be strengthened;
 - use and experience of information and communication technologies should be introduced through improvements in the quality and range of available resources and through teaching.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 199 In end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999, 61% of students were meeting the national expectation in physical education with 25% exceeding it. No teacher assessments were made for non-examination students at age 16. Standards achieved by students taking GCSE courses in 1999 were high and well above the

national standard, with 64.4% of students gaining grades A*-C. This shows an increase of over 36% on those students gaining A*-C grades in 1998.

- 200 During the inspection, lessons were observed in badminton, basketball, dance, football, hockey, netball, swimming and GCSE theory, and in extra-curricular badminton, football and hockey sessions.
- 201 At age 14, students' planning, performing and evaluation skills are broadly in line with national expectations with several students achieving high standards in football and swimming. In the dance and badminton lessons however, students' attainment was below that normally seen. Students have not been taught the principles of dance composition and consequently do not know how to compose dances. In badminton, students are able to maintain a rally but do not use recognisable strokes. Most students can swim 25 metres, with several students showing good style. Students' dribbling, passing and receiving skills in hockey and football are satisfactory, and in line with their experience of the game, with several boys showing high levels of skill in football. Students understand the importance of creating and moving into a space to receive the ball in football, with high attaining students able to put this into practice in the game situation. When given the opportunity, students can describe simple movements accurately. Boys achieve some very good results in extra-curricular football. In 1999, Year 9 boys won the Mercury Shield for cricket.
- 202 At age 16, students' planning, performing and evaluation skills are still in line overall with national expectations, with several students achieving high standards in basketball and netball. Students' attainment in GCSE lessons is in line with the full range of GCSE grades. Most students know and understand the rules of the games they play and usually apply them. Most can use a variety of different passes in netball and basketball and use them successfully to outwit opponents. They are able to act as officials in these games but need more confidence in making and conveying decisions to players. In the Year 10 badminton lesson seen, most students were able to sustain a rally using a variety of strokes. Approximately half the students could successfully play an overhead clear and several students could use a drop shot. In swimming, students' performance and analysis of the backstroke is similar to that normally seen. They know and understand the basic coaching points needed to produce the correct backstroke technique. In the extra-curricular badminton match seen, eight Year 11 students showed very high levels of skill in all aspects of the game. Year 11 boys have also been very successful in football fixtures reaching the semi-final of the Leicestershire County Cup. Several students have been selected for County trials in hockey and netball, with one girl selected for the Midland trials in Ladies' Rugby.
- 203 Students' response to physical education is good overall, although some students are not always punctual and do not show any sense of urgency to reach the playing areas. Most students usually listen well to instructions and are usually courteous to each other as well as to the teacher. They cooperate well in small groups or teams. They are usually willing to answer questions and most are willing to give or receive constructive criticism. Students treat equipment with respect and usually enjoy their physical education lessons.
- 204 The quality of both teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in games and swimming, but unsatisfactory in dance, which limits students' acquisition of knowledge and understanding of dance composition. Teachers usually manage to motivate students well and use a range of appropriate teaching strategies to do so, including student

and teacher demonstration. Teachers are good at coaching in the games situation to improve students' knowledge and understanding of tactical play. Teachers' expectations of students' behaviour are high and once the lessons have started students work at a good pace expending a great deal of energy. However, students who are not able to take part practically in the lessons are often ignored. They are usually not included in the lesson and are often allowed to complete work unrelated to physical education. Students are appropriately praised for their efforts, but the praise is often of a general nature rather than focusing specifically on what students know, understand and can do. The main weakness of the teaching stems from unsatisfactory planning. Lesson objectives are often unclear, so that students are not aware of what they will know, understand or be able to do better by the end of the lesson. Whilst individual tasks are often well structured, these are not chosen well or built up in logical stages to bring about the desired learning outcomes.

Students are not always able to acquire new skills, as essential teaching points are sometimes omitted. For example, in a badminton lesson, students were not shown the correct grip for the service and nor were they shown the correct shape of the stroke.

- 205 The department is soundly led and resources efficiently managed. Monitoring of teaching has taken place and regular departmental meetings are held to discuss curriculum issues. The departmental development plan is in place and issues have been prioritised, but there is insufficient detail to show what action is to be taken to meet targets especially in relation to improving procedures for assessment, recording and reporting and the implementation of use of information technology. The department does not have a risk assessment policy.
- 206 The curriculum is broad, but there is an imbalance in favour of games. The good extra-curricular programme enhances learning opportunities. Schemes of work are in place, but specific objectives for each unit of work are unclear and do not provide sufficient detail to show clear progression from year to year in individual activities. Nor do they take account of what students have already learned before they come to the college. In Years 10 and 11, there is insufficient time allocated for non-examination students to allow full coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Assessment procedures are in place but the criteria used are not directly linked to the end of key stage descriptors. Assessment criteria for GCSE students, however, do link specifically to the grade descriptions of the examination board. Reports to parents do not give a clear statement on students' progress since their previous report. A strength of the subject is the very good contribution it makes to students' moral and social development. Students are encouraged to obey the decisions of officials without question. In the badminton fixture seen, students were umpiring their own games and did so showing fairness and generosity to their opponents.
- 207 Since the previous report there have been no significant changes in standards achieved by students or in the quality of students' learning. The quality of teaching is still satisfactory overall but the quality of teachers' planning, which was identified as a strength in the previous report, is now a weakness.
- 208 In order for further improvement to take place, the issue of planning needs to be addressed.
- Objectives for units of work and individual lessons need to be clarified, with tasks chosen more carefully to bring about the desired learning outcomes.

- Lines of progression in students' knowledge, understanding and performance of skills need to be specifically identified in schemes of work and tighter liaison with contributory primary schools on students' prior attainment needs to take place.
- Students "off practical" need to be profitably involved in all lessons.
- More time is needed for non-examination students in Years 10 and 11 so that the programmes of study can be fully covered.
- Training is needed to improve teachers' subject knowledge in dance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 209 Results in GCSE examinations over recent years have been well below national averages for grades A*-C, but there has been a steady improvement over the last two years. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C rose to 40 per cent, although this is still below national averages. Across grades A*-G, students achieve well and the 100 per cent pass rate in 1999 exceeded the national average. Individually, students' results in GCSE Religious Studies compare favourably with their results in other subjects.
- 210 By the age of 14, students achieve standards that are in line with the expectations of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. Students have a satisfactory knowledge of the key features of the religions that they have studied. In Year 8, students can describe the main events that take place during festivals such as Eid-ul-Fitr and explain why they are important to believers. By Year 9, students are able to describe the key features of holy books, such as the Bible and the Qur'an. They understand why they are important to believers and can explain the different ways in which respect and reverence is shown for them. Students are able to reflect on their own experiences and recognise what influences their own lives. In their work on communities, students in Year 7 are able to identify the different groups that they belonged to and can explain some of the ways that, like members of a faith group, they are expected to show commitment. Overall, students with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards. Students who are talented and gifted do not achieve the very high standards of which they are capable, and their work shows lack of depth in understanding of the key beliefs and teachings central to the religions studied.
- 211 In Years 10 and 11, all students are taught a small amount of religious education through two short units of study in the tutorial programme. By the age of 16, standards of achievement in these lessons are poor and well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Students of all abilities make very slow progress. In the small amount of time given to religious education, students do not have the opportunity to deepen or extend their knowledge and understanding of different faiths. In particular, their understanding of the ways in which people's beliefs may influence their behaviour and way of life is poor. For example, they have little awareness of how religious teachings can influence attitudes to family life. In the GCSE Religious Studies groups, students are achieving satisfactory standards. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve good standards. In their work on Christianity, students in Year 10 are able to research the important features of worship in different denominations and identify similarities and differences. By the

age of 16, students show a sound knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Islam, such as fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the way that they influence the life of a Muslim.

- 212 Students show interest in the subject and have positive attitudes to their work. They are keen to ask and answer questions as well as share their own experiences with the rest of the class. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, students were willing to give presentations to the rest of the class on the groups that they belong to. Behaviour in lessons is very good and relationships are good. Students work well on tasks that they are set, such as pair work research on worship. They listen well to each other and show a good sense of mutual respect for others' beliefs and feelings.
- 213 Teaching and learning are both sound overall. A strength of the teaching lies in the good relationships with students. Teachers successfully create an atmosphere of mutual respect in lessons so that students feel confident to share their ideas and experiences with the rest of the class, for example in giving a presentation about the groups that they belong to. Lessons are well planned and the main focus of the lesson is made clear to students. This helps students to learn because they know what they are expected to do by the end of the lesson. Teachers use questioning sensitively and well to help students share and explain their ideas. This was particularly effective in the Year 10 GCSE class where careful use of questioning by the teacher gave students with special educational needs enough support to enable them to explain what they had found out about a Christian place of worship. Lessons are well managed so that students are able to work individually, in pairs or in groups with the minimum of disruption. Teachers work hard to use students' own experiences as the starting point for many topics and this helps them to develop their understanding of the way that religious beliefs might be important to people as well as reflect on their own beliefs and values. Although the teaching is sound overall, there are some aspects that are in need of improvement. In particular, when teachers from outside the department teach the lessons, for example in tutorial lessons, there are significant weaknesses. In these lessons teachers lack subject knowledge and so do not cover the material in sufficient depth to enable students to make enough progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the topic. In some lessons, too much time is spent on teacher exposition, and this slows the pace of the lesson down so that students are unable to complete the tasks set. Overall, lack of challenge in some of the teaching, particularly in the tasks set, means that students with high prior attainment do not always make the rapid progress that they are capable of. Students' work is marked regularly and comments usually give encouragement but there are too few comments about how work might be improved.
- 214 Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The day to day management of the subject is efficient and there are detailed schemes of work in place. However, there are some weaknesses in curriculum planning. Although the curriculum covers the range of topics required by the Agreed Syllabus for Years 7-9, it lacks breadth because there is imbalance in the faiths chosen for study. Across Years 7-9 and also during the GCSE course, Christianity and Islam are the two main religions chosen for study. This means that there are not enough opportunities for students to learn about the other major faiths represented in Great Britain. In particular, there are too few opportunities for the study of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Although there are sound procedures in place for assessing students' work in the subject, insufficient use is made of assessment results to help students set targets for improvement. The department does not make enough use of resources in the community, such as visits to local places of worship, to support and

enrich students' learning. Insufficient use is made of information technology to enhance students' learning in the subject.

- 215 The previous inspection reported a failure to meet the statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11. Although there are now short units of religious education in the tutorial programme, the statutory requirements are still not met, and progress has been unsatisfactory. The previous inspection reported an inadequate supply of textbooks. The range of textbooks continues to be limited. In particular there are not enough texts and materials to extend the learning of high attaining students.
- 216 In order to improve the subject the college should:
- ensure that the statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 are met;
 - review the content of the curriculum to ensure that students have the opportunity to study a broader range of faiths;
 - review approaches to teaching and learning so that students with high prior attainment are appropriately challenged;
 - make greater use of assessment information to help students set targets for improvement;
 - develop a broader range of resources used to support the subject by increasing the range of textbooks, making greater use of information technology, and by visiting places of worship.