

ERRATUM

In the table, **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**, Percentage of students achieving the standard specified. The National figures should read **46.3 (44.6)** **90.7 (89.8)** **5.7 (95.2)**

INSPECTION REPORT

IVYBRIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

IVYBRIDGE

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113541

Principal: GEOFFREY REES

Reporting inspector: Barbara Hilton
3228

Dates of inspection: 31 January - 4 February 2000

Inspection number: 900106

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
College address:	Harford Road IVYBRIDGE Devon
Postcode:	PL21 OJA
Telephone number:	01752 691000
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Treve Mitchell
Date of previous inspection:	26 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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			Teaching
			Curriculum
			Assessment
			English as an additional language
			Leadership and management
			What the college should do to improve further
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			Support, guidance and students' welfare
			Partnership with parents
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		Drama	
Margaret Price	Team inspector	Mathematics	
James Berry	Team inspector	Science	
John Hunt	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	Tertiary (sixth form)
Ann Philp	Team inspector	Religious education	Personal development opportunities
			Community links
John Richards	Team inspector	Art	
Clive Potter	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Marjorie Thomas	Team inspector	Geography	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History	
Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish)	
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Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
William Stoneham	Team inspector	Vocational (business) courses	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Ivybridge is a large comprehensive school with Sports College status and extensive community provision. It is popular and the roll is rising. The total number of students aged 11-18 is 1883, including 337 in the tertiary sector (sixth form); numbers of boys and girls are nearly equal. The attainment of students on entry is wide-ranging and average overall. The proportions of students with special educational needs and with statements are average. Very low numbers of students come from ethnic minority backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Students enter the college from 14 linked primary schools, in Ivybridge and surrounding villages.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Ivybridge is a very good and effective college. Standards of achievement are good overall, with many examples of outstandingly high attainment. Students are helped to make the most of themselves through very good teaching and the rich learning experience offered. Students learn well in a supportive environment with high expectations. Staff work together well and are managed efficiently. Governors are committed to the continued improvement of the college and work in effective partnership with the senior managers and the principal, who provides outstandingly good leadership and vigorous drive towards excellence. The organisation is complex and dynamic. Total consistency in striving for high quality is a key feature of its success. The college provides very good value for money and the tertiary sector is effective.

What the college does well

- Results at GCSE for 5 grades A*-C and 5 grades A*-G are well above the national average and in the top league for similar schools in Devon;
- Standards throughout the college, including the tertiary sector, match or exceed national expectations, with examples of high standards in most subjects and outstanding strengths in art, photography, science, design and technology, music and sports;
- Teaching is very good: students are well managed and given many opportunities to succeed;
- The curriculum is rich and varied with excellent extra-curricular activities and primary links;
- Students' literacy, numeracy and computer skills develop well through opportunities in many subjects;
- The climate for learning is excellent, very well resourced in first-class accommodation;
- Staff are very caring; students are known well individually and they are helped to develop as whole persons;
- Relationships are excellent and tertiary students have a good measure of independence;
- Community provision is excellent and supports the overall development of students;
- Outstanding leadership generates significant improvements for the college.

What could be improved

- The consistency and clarity with which assessment is used to improve standards in subjects.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement has been very good. Over the last four years the college roll has increased by over 200 students, the accommodation has been improved substantially and examination results, which were already good, have improved broadly in line with the national trend. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Response to the specific issues identified in the last report has been very good overall. The learning environment is now excellent, with new buildings and much improved computer facilities; the college has become a regional centre for training in the use of information and communications technology. Significant improvement has been made in provision for religious education and opportunities for reflection and worship. Satisfactory improvement has been made in assessment arrangements, particularly the use of information to guide individuals, though in subjects the use of information for curricular improvement is variable, particularly at Key Stage 3. Work with the community goes from strength to strength: the range of opportunities provided for people of all ages and abilities is impressive. The college has moved further towards

excellence and gained Sports College status and also, for the second time, recognition as an Investor in People and as an Investor in Careers, and the Charter Mark, for excellence in public service.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Overall results at GCSE are above the national average, and in many subjects students achieve a high proportion of the highest grades. Results for both 5 A*-C grades and 5 A*-G grades were well above average in 1999. All students achieved at least one GCSE certificate, which is very high, compared with all schools nationally. Results are particularly good in English language, mathematics, science, dance, drama, French, music and design and technology. Both boys and girls do at least as well as expected in virtually all subjects, except for boys in Spanish, where results are disappointing. Overall, results have improved steadily over the last few years, in line with the trend nationally. Results represent good added-value from levels of attainment on entry which are average. By the end of Key Stage 3, results of National Curriculum tests are above average overall, with science results better than those in English and mathematics. In the tertiary sector, results at A level are average, with high results in art, photography, design and technology and chemistry. Results have not been so good in theatre studies and Spanish, although predictions for future results are good. Success on vocational courses is high; students enjoy and benefit from the style of learning and work placements.

The college uses a wide range of methods to assess the abilities of students in Year 7. Support for students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students is good and enables them to achieve well. The college makes good use of assessment information to monitor individuals and to set targets for results at the end of key stages. The targets set are high and examination results exceed them: students achieve well.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Students are proud of their college and participate well in all that the college provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good.
Personal development and relationships	Students develop a very good sense of purpose as they progress through the college. They show great respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Very good.

Students' behaviour, attitudes and values are a strength of the college. They participate very well in lessons and maintain a good pace in their learning, which helps their progress. They have good study skills and make effective use of information and communications technology. Students improve their work at lunchtime when, in many subject areas, there are organised activities as well as opportunities for them to work at their own pace; the atmosphere is happy and purposeful.

Participation is high in sports and music activities at the end of the day. Students contribute to the life of the college at many levels. Relationships are courteous, respectful and caring. Students have a well-developed sense of personal responsibility and readily take opportunities for helping and representing others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	very good	very good	very good

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

The quality of teaching is very good, overall. It is good or better in 75 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in about 36 per cent of lessons. In virtually all of the rest it is satisfactory. In many areas of the college teachers' understanding and flair contribute well to students' achievements. Students improve their skills and understanding through expert tuition. They are inspired by many examples of high achievement around them, as in art, music and physical education. Teachers set challenging and interesting work for students of all abilities. For example, recent building work on the school site stimulated a variety of work in mathematics, helping some students cope with straightforward calculations, and more advanced students learn about critical path analysis. Challenge slips in only a few groups, for example, in some modern foreign language lessons at Key Stage 3. Students' skills with numbers are effectively developed in many lessons, though there is no systematic approach across the college. Literacy is consistently well developed. Effective use is made of information and communications technology by teachers in many areas. The excellent relationships and very good management of students support high standards of behaviour. Students' learning is very good, overall. They are interested in their work, maintain a good pace and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. Very good links with further and higher education colleges and universities help to raise expectations: high proportions stay on in education at 16 and after the tertiary sector.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Successful balance is achieved between the timetabled curriculum and opportunities for students' personal development: overall, a rich range of learning experience is offered.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very effective, especially in improving literacy, promoting positive attitudes and confidence, and preparing students for adult life.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The college provides very well for the personal development of students. Individuals are valued and respected. Planned opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.
How well the college cares for its students	Focus on students' welfare and support is very good.

The college works very well with parents, who appreciate the wide range of opportunities and support provided. Links with primary schools are outstandingly good. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. It is well planned and organised to build on the interests and aptitudes of students. They all have access to the full curriculum and study double award science up to GCSE. The links developed through physical education with art, health education, English, mathematics and information and communications technology assist students' progress in all these subjects. The college provides well for students of all attainment levels. In the tertiary sector, the choice of A level subjects is very good. Students achieve well on the vocational courses in business and in sports, and the college is

extending the range of vocational courses provided, to include science and art from September 2000. Extra-curricular activities are an outstanding strength. Their variety is excellent, with a particularly rich range of physical education and outdoor activities. The pastoral system is very well organised. The college provides a high level of care. Information on students is very well used to help individuals to progress.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Leadership and management by the principal are outstandingly good, supported by very good teamwork among the senior management team and throughout the college. The ethos is strongly dynamic and supportive.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are deeply committed to the college and its role in Ivybridge and work in effective partnership with the principal and senior staff towards constant improvement.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The college is well aware of its substantial strengths and areas which should be improved.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent.

The principal generates a strong sense of purpose. Within this large college there is dual focus on achievement and success, and care and support for individuals. Planning for improvement is well managed and synchronised so that the college as a whole moves forward. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated. The director of community education and senior administrator are very effective contributors to overall college improvements. Senior managers and governors are scrupulous in pursuing best value, for example in improving accommodation and learning facilities. The college is well staffed. Accommodation is excellent and there is a very good range of learning resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standards; • Leadership; • Work in many subjects; • Each student is known and helped individually; • Opportunities and facilities; • Links with primary schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of homework; • Links with parents.

Parents are very supportive of the college and think highly of its services and the standards it achieves. The concerns they expressed were usually coupled with praise about overall standards. Inspectors' evidence does not confirm the concern by a small but significant minority of parents about ways in which the college works with parents and the information they receive: inspectors judge both to be good. Parents regularly sign students' planners. Their concerns about homework were equally divided between those who felt there was too much and those who said there was not enough. Inspectors found that homework is set regularly and generally in good amounts. Students, when talking with inspectors, said they understood that if they were concerned they could discuss the amounts set with their teachers. Many parents said that links with primary schools were excellent, enabled students to settle quickly into the college and make the most of its many opportunities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

Overall results

1. The standards students achieved in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science were above the national average, both for all schools and for similar schools. Results at this stage in 1999 were stronger in science than in English and mathematics. Results were similar for boys and girls. These results represent good achievement by students, relative to their attainment on entry in Year 7, which was broadly average.
2. Overall results in the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) in 1999 were above average, both for all schools and for similar schools. However, in terms of five subjects at the higher grades (A*-C), results were well above average, likewise for five subjects across the full range of grades (A*-G). The college was very successful in 1999 in enabling all students to achieve at least one GCSE certificate at the end of Year 11: this ranks as very high in comparison with all schools nationally. The difference between students' GCSE results overall (above average) and results for five subjects (well above average) is probably due to the school's GCSE entry policy. Students have not been entered for some subjects, for example information and communications technology, although they are likely to be entered in future, which is a benefit of substantial improvement in facilities. In 1999, the average results of boys and girls were equally good although girls' results tended to be more polarised with greater proportions of high and low results than boys. GCSE results represent good achievement for students with special educational needs. Overall, standards in lessons observed were in line with GCSE results obtained. In some lessons, higher standards were observed than results might suggest, but students were not working under examination conditions, and benefited from help given by each other and the teacher.
3. Results for the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (A level) in 1999 were broadly average and similar for both young men and women. Results of vocational courses were well above average. Students like the approach to learning on vocational courses, and their experience on work placements, and generally do well. Bearing in mind the average attainment of students on entry in Year 7, and that 70 per cent of the students continue into the tertiary sector, achievement is satisfactory at the end of this sector.

Results in the core subjects: English, mathematics and science

4. Students achieve well in the core subjects. GCSE results in 1999 in English, mathematics and science were well above average, both for all schools nationally and also for similar schools. Virtually all Year 11 students were entered for these subjects. Results at A level were about average in English and physics, and above average in mathematics and chemistry. Results dipped in biology, but in most years they are average.
5. Standards in lessons and work observed were in line with results. In English, enjoyment and appreciation of literature develops well, alongside control and accuracy in the use of language. In mathematics, problem-solving is well used to promote achievement across a wide range of skills. In science, students apply well their skills of scientific investigation to increase their knowledge and understanding of materials, living things and the physical world.

Results of other subjects and courses

6. In lessons and work seen at the end of Key Stage 3, standards in lessons, while covering a wide range, were generally above national expectations. Teachers' assessments in some subjects are cautious, and underestimate students' performance. This is mostly due to lack of experience in standardising assessment across big departments. The standards reached represent good achievement overall, and high achievement in drama and art. In a few areas achievement could be higher, where work lacks challenge, for example in higher attaining classes in design and technology and modern foreign languages.

7. Results for most subjects at GCSE are in line with or above the national average; this overall consistency is good. In 1999, well above average results were obtained in dance, drama, design and technology, French and music. Results were above average in business studies, history, physical education and religious education. Results were average in other subjects, except for electronics (in which few were entered) and Spanish (where boys did not do well).
8. Standards observed in lessons and work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 were good, overall: much was above average. Students are achieving well across this key stage, and highly in art and drama. They are achieving well above the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Effective teaching and support are helping students with special educational needs to keep up with others in their class: they progress well, and very well in information and communications technology, art, drama and religious education. Able and talented students progress very well in most subjects: they are well challenged in lessons and through effective use of extension work. Their high performance in drama, design and technology, art, music, and physical education, including sports and expeditions, is very evident through display and events at the college.
9. At A level, while results are mostly average and sometimes a little better, they tend to fluctuate, because numbers of students entered are lower. In art and photography, results are consistently high, reflecting the outstanding achievements of able students who are helped to do their best. Results in design and technology and chemistry are consistently good, while those in other subjects, for example physics and biology, vary around the average. Results in modern foreign languages vary to a greater extent, with exceptionally high results in French in 1999, about average results in German and low results in Spanish. Results in theatre studies have been lower than in most other subjects. The secure indications are that A level results overall will be considerably better in 2000 than in 1999.
10. Standards observed in A level lessons and work are consistent with results. Students achieve satisfactorily; there is virtually no low achievement. Outstanding achievement by tertiary students in art, design and technology, music and physical education is celebrated in many ways in the life of the college. A few students with special educational needs keep up with course requirements and achieve a pass at A level. They do well.
11. Students studying for vocational qualifications in business achieve well. Results are above the national average with high proportions achieving merits and distinctions. Standards in lessons are a little higher than course expectations. Absence among students on the advanced course detracts from their overall good progress.

Literacy and numeracy

12. The standard of literacy in the college is above average. Students have very good listening skills and they develop confidence in speaking through practice in many lessons. They learn to read out loud, with good expression and timing. Older students are articulate in discussion. Students enjoy reading a wide range of literature. Their writing is clear and generally accurate, drawing on an apt vocabulary. They have opportunity to write in different forms and styles, and learn to express themselves logically and to present an argument, as well as to write creatively.
13. Standards of numeracy are good overall. Younger students are confident in basic number operations and their skills develop through planned approaches in mathematics. They make effective use of a variety of mathematical techniques in other subjects, but there is no common approach to developing number work across the curriculum. Statistics are well used in geography, calculations in science and students handle data in various ways in business studies and on vocational courses. Activities in art contribute to the development of students' spatial awareness.

Trends

14. Results, both at GCSE and A level, are improving in line with national trends. The college's results at GCSE are in the top league for similar schools (mixed comprehensive) in Devon.

The college monitors students' progress carefully and sets challenging targets for GCSE results, which exceed predictions based on students' achievements on entry. Very good teaching and good study habits among students enable them to successfully exceed the target results. The approach to target-setting for A levels has not been so systematic, although A level predictions for 2000 are substantially better than in recent years.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Students are proud of their college. They respond very well to the high expectations of behaviour and work established by the college. Their attitudes to coming to college are very good. They attend the college very regularly and promptly, and many participate in extra-curricular activities. The take-up of opportunities for sports by both boys and girls is very high. Students have a commitment to personal study which is well supported by the college. A high number of students attend the study support groups at lunchtime. Students with special educational needs value the support they receive, show very good trust in the staff and happily mix with other students. High numbers of students stay on in the tertiary sector and progress onto higher education.
16. The standard of behaviour is excellent in lessons. Students have a mature approach, are interested and attentive, and use the learning opportunities very productively, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the tertiary sector. Behaviour is very good outside lessons. Students show a high level of awareness of others' presence, conduct themselves in an orderly manner and are helpful, friendly and communicative. They show respect for property. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection and none was reported by students or parents. While the number of exclusions has increased since the last inspection, the proportion is average for the size of the college and they have been for valid reasons. Correct procedures for exclusions were observed.
17. Relationships are excellent. Very high levels of mutual respect are evident. Students collaborate very well in small groups during lessons; they show affection and care for each other outside of lessons and respect for each other's feelings, values and beliefs. They express their views openly and confidently. Students have a well-developed sense of personal responsibility and are quick to take opportunities for helping and representing others. For example, older students mentor younger students and take part in paired-reading, and students skilfully act as representatives on year and college councils.
18. Students' behaviour and attitudes were good at the time of the last inspection, and contributed well to their learning, and high standards have been maintained. When account is taken of the quality of participation in the wide range of opportunities the college provides, students contribute very well to their overall personal development.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching at Ivybridge is very good. In about 75 per cent of the lessons the teaching is good or better and in 36 per cent it is very good or excellent. In virtually all other lessons teaching is satisfactory; it is unsatisfactory in only two per cent of lessons. Teaching has improved further upon that reported at the last inspection, when it was generally good, sometimes very good and judged a strength of the college. Then, there were instances when key points were not emphasised, students did not have enough opportunities to practise a variety of skills and teachers tolerated inappropriate behaviour, but these are far less frequent now. Teachers now, as then, are very hard working. In many areas of the college their understanding and flair contribute well to students' learning and achievements.
20. Very good features of teaching include teachers' use of their knowledge and understanding to help students learn; effective lesson planning to build systematically on what students know and can do; and efficient use of the full lesson time. In all subjects there are examples of teachers' very good use of their subject knowledge. In English, for example, teachers are very good at helping students increase their understanding of a wide range of literature. In science, students make very good progress in understanding scientific ideas because the teachers place clear emphasis on crucial points to focus students' learning. In religious education, teachers' range and depth of knowledge contribute substantially to successful delivery. They help students to learn the meaning behind religious accounts and to start to think

philosophically. Expert tuition enables students to enjoy, participate fully in and acquire skills in a wide range of physical education activities, art, drama and music. Explanations are clear and teachers are very good role models so students develop creative and reasoning skills. Teachers have good understanding of the development of literacy, numeracy and computer skills through their own subject. Students learn to speak and read well through opportunities in many subjects. Their numeracy skills develop through calculating, drawing graphs and handling abstract ideas in science, geography and business subjects. Students rapidly develop good information and communications technology skills through opportunities to use computers in various ways – for example, in the presentation of their work, in analysing data and in researching information.

21. Teachers have very high expectations. The college's arrangements for grouping students according to their attainment generally work very well and assist teachers in planning appropriate work. Students of all attainment levels are expected to apply intellectual, physical or creative effort and they respond well. High attaining students in mathematics, for example, deepen their knowledge and learn beyond the syllabus boundaries for GCSE: this raises the proportion of A*/A grades obtained. Tertiary students learning modern foreign languages develop their linguistic skills and knowledge of other cultures through themes and topics which teachers introduce into lessons. Occasional instances of lack of challenge, particularly at Key Stage 3, allow the pace of learning to slip, for example among middle attaining groups in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3. Subject teachers' expectations of students with special educational needs are generally much the same as those for any students of their age; the students rise to the challenge and achieve very well. Lessons for small groups of students with special educational needs are also effective; teachers build on students' interests. Many students return to subject areas at lunchtimes, to practise and improve their skills. They are inspired by the many examples of high achievement around them: by outstandingly good art work; by the many opportunities the college provides to create music; by examples of excellence in physical education and sports activities.
22. Overall, the range of teaching methods used is good – and some very good approaches are used. In science, for example, practical work is very well used so students develop a good understanding of scientific investigation. Mathematics teachers exploited recent building work (on the Millennium block) to very good effect, with a range of applications from straightforward calculations for some students to critical path analysis for those who were more advanced. Research and activity-based methods are well used in all years in history. Field work is very well used in geography: Year 11 students are proud of the progress they have made using a range of techniques to study tidal patterns at Bee Sands. Excellent use is made of the Internet as a source of information in several subjects and in business studies, particularly. Occasionally, the methods used provide insufficient variety for the duration of the lesson. Worksheets, in a minority of geography and science lessons, become monotonous and students follow them mechanically, without being involved. On the whole, though, teachers use time and resources very well so that the one hour lesson time is efficiently used. Learning support assistants are attentive, help students with special educational needs to keep up with the class and provide a clear focus for learning – both in academic as well as in practical subjects, including physical education. Teachers use homework well, on the whole. It is regularly set and extends opportunities for students to apply their learning and also to learn more.
23. The management of students is outstandingly good, founded on excellent relationships. Behaviour is almost generally excellent. No time is wasted in managing students because they assist willingly in lesson arrangements. Tertiary students are treated as adults. The contributions of students are respected by teachers and students respond very well as, for example, in art, design and technology and general studies. Overall, the climate for learning is very good: purposeful and friendly.
24. Students are very willing learners. They are punctual, arrive with the necessary equipment, and co-operate well both with other students and the teachers. They maintain a good work pace during lessons and when topics catch their interest – as in sports, drama and art – they work very hard indeed and give freely of their own time. They apply their previous learning to new tasks and as their literacy skills develop, so does the quality of their written work, in history, for example. They use their knowledge of scientific investigation to help them learn science and their understanding of design principles improves as they progress in design and technology.

25. Students' work is regularly marked, usually with helpful comments and with grades, in line with the college policy. Teachers have very good records, in every class, of students' attainments and they know the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. In several subjects, including English, drama and science, students have opportunities to assess their own progress. In science, aspects of design and technology and in physical education, teachers help students to understand how they are progressing by informing them of their progress relative to the National Curriculum (or GCSE) and students' planners include lists of physical education skills. However, in most other subjects, and especially in Key Stage 3, teachers give little detail about progress relative to national expectations. In subjects where teachers openly refer to national criteria, students tend to do best, and extending this practice is an area for development.

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

26. Successful balance is achieved between the main timetabled curriculum and the range of opportunities provided for students' personal development: overall, a rich learning experience is offered. The following section covers the main curriculum (with focus on Key Stages 3 and 4) and provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Sections on the tertiary sector (sixth form) and community links are included separately at the end of Part B of the report.

CURRICULAR PROVISION

27. The quality and range of the curriculum across Key Stages 3 and 4 are very good. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and is well planned and organised to build on the interests and aptitudes of students. All students have access to the full curricular offer and all study double award science to GCSE. Almost 30 per cent of students study two modern languages, from Year 9 upwards. The links developed through physical education with art (the granite tor painted as backdrop to the climbing wall); through health education (for example the college-based research project with Exeter University); and through mathematics, English and information and communications technology (in recording and evaluating results and data) assist students' progress in all these subjects. The size of the college makes it possible to provide a good range of opportunities as, for example, the choice of three modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish) and strong groups in biology, chemistry and physics at A level. The benefit of size is particularly evident in areas where numbers of students are needed to form groups – as in music, where there are various instrumental groups and a wind orchestra, and in physical education, where a very rich curriculum is provided. While no vocational qualifications are provided at Key Stage 4, virtually all students achieve GCSE certificates by the end of the stage, and they are very proud of their achievements. In the last few years, the college has not offered a GCSE subject in information and communications technology but, with improvement in facilities, the college plans that this shortcoming will be addressed.
28. Arrangements for grouping students according to their level of attainment work well. Inspectors observed students working hard in all levels of classes. Parents at their meeting with inspectors were well satisfied with arrangements for groups. The college is very good at identifying particular needs and opportunities and addressing them. Every subject has considered the needs of high ability and talented students and provides special extension activities. Small group work for students with special educational needs is effectively organised. In subject lessons, teachers and learning support assistants adapt and plan activities to help students with special educational needs to work to the targets of their individual education plans.
29. Opportunities for students to practise and gain basic skills – literacy, numeracy and computer skills – across the curriculum are very good overall. Approaches to literacy and information and communications technology are consistently very good. Many opportunities to use numbers and mathematical ideas are incorporated in relevant subjects, for example, design and technology, geography, science and business studies.

30. Extra-curricular activities are an outstanding strength. A very rich range of physical education and outdoor activities is available including competitive games (in many of which students are very successful), athletics, climbing and expeditions (the Ten Tors). Music and drama activities provide regular opportunities for students to practise and improve their skills in informal settings, as well as through major productions. At lunchtimes, in all subject areas, students have opportunities to use facilities and work at their own pace, or join clubs. Regular homework clubs are provided. Before examinations revision sessions are held. Visits abroad enable students to improve their modern language skills and extend their knowledge and appreciation of other subjects, for example, history (in Florence), geography (in Colorado, USA), art (in Paris) and music (in Vienna).
31. Personal and social education is well planned and includes religious education in a coherent programme at Key Stage 4. Throughout the college students have regular tutorial lessons. Health, sex and drugs awareness education are well covered in both social education and in tutorial lessons, as well as in science and physical education. Effective use is made of specialists from outside the college. Topics about making choices and vocational opportunities are introduced from Year 7 and form the foundation of a very good careers education programme. Key Stage 4 students benefit from a very well organised work experience programme. Careers events are arranged at appropriate stages, Years 9 and 11 particularly, to help students make choices. Links with the local careers service are excellent and all Year 11 students have the opportunity for an individual interview with a careers officer.
32. Co-operation and support for feeder primary schools are excellent. Primary age pupils join in school music and sports activities. Curricular links through science and literacy projects are strong. Year 5 students visit Ivybridge and Year 6 students intending to join the college are met individually; parents speak highly about transfer and induction arrangements. Links with local further and higher education colleges and universities are also very effective and support the progression of students from Year 11 and the tertiary sector.
33. At the time of the last inspection curricular arrangements were good. All of the strengths noted then have been maintained and weaknesses tackled. Students now make very effective use of information and communications technology across the curriculum. Religious education has been strengthened and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, throughout the college. Arrangements for students grouped according to their ability work well. Curricular strengths have been recognised at national level in significant ways, through Affiliation to the Technology Colleges' Trust, as an Investor in Education Business Partnership, as an Investor in Careers, and the acquisition of Sports College status.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

34. The college provides very well for the personal development of its students. The underlying values of the college are clear both in its stated aims and in its codes of conduct. Each year group has one assembly each week. This has merit in developing shared values, appreciation of students' achievements and contributes importantly to the spiritual development of students in all years. Some assemblies include worship, but this is not the dominant theme, overall. In tutor groups, students have a daily focus for attention or discussion. These opportunities are conscientiously observed, and can be very thought-provoking, although the depth of attention given varies considerably from class to class. Teachers pull together and the consistency with which opportunities are used is impressive. Students take a full part in introducing ideas for reflection during tutorial time and discussion arising from ideas presented. In the tertiary sector, the fully integrated approach to spiritual development across a number of activities is very good indeed. It is well co-ordinated, provides stimulating challenge and is sensitively delivered.
35. Overall, opportunities for students' spiritual development are very good and religious education makes a significant contribution. Students are introduced to a wide range of religious beliefs and practices, get chances to discuss the impact of belief on behaviour and are given opportunities to experience more formal ways of exploring the inner self through meditation exercises such as 'stilling'. The quality of the teaching in religious education contributes significantly to this process. Other areas of the curriculum also make a substantial contribution,

particularly art, drama and music. Because students are taught to appreciate learning, and to respect the values and beliefs of others, they readily make connections and appreciate the inner life of individuals and communities. A notable example in a tertiary class was the willingness of a student to spend some time trying to fathom what was meant by beauty and whether the beautiful inspires a sense of the divine. He identified his own homework, to extend progress made in the classroom, and chose to explore his topic through the context of the sea. Students are purposefully taught to respect and understand the value systems of others. Examples seen included an exploration of special foods and dietary practices, with special reference to kosher food, and an exploration of Christian marriage. This led to a lively discussion on whether a church wedding is appropriate if you do not hold Christian beliefs about marriage and the family.

36. The college vigorously upholds high standards of right and wrong. Behaviour in the college is excellent. Students are well mannered and helpful. Clear expectations, and firm action when standards slip, are all set within a supportive framework which leaves students knowing quite clearly what is acceptable. College staff treat students kindly and well. One student on 'report' (the only one noted) acknowledged and understood why higher standards were expected. Students talked about why their parents wanted them to attend the college and high standards were basic to the reasons given.
37. Wider and more complex moral issues are discussed in many subjects. Good examples were observed during discussion of ethical issues in science, in studying literature in English, and in learning about types of government in history. Students explored ideas about corporate responsibility, trade sanctions and politics in business studies, and considered appropriate use of materials in technology, including food for religious observance, and gardens for the handicapped.
38. Many moral and social issues are debated by students in all years in well constructed tutor sessions. Social education (at Key Stage 4) includes statutory religious education. The schemes of work are clear and comprehensive. Discussion is developed within a framework of responsibility and respect and some imaginative work was seen on peer pressure and in sex education. Students work well together. Good examples were seen of group work in science and physical education where they were co-operative and enhanced each other's learning as a result. Students readily share information with each other. The range of extra-curricular activities, at lunchtime and at the end of the day, is very varied: there is always plenty to do. Students study for sports leadership awards and grow in confidence as they learn to help others. Teachers are good role models and students are given clear teaching on citizenship issues as well as having many opportunities to take responsibility. Year and college councils are well established; students are busy revising the code of conduct. Older students mentor younger ones and help with the numerous activities run jointly with primary schools. They willingly take responsibility for, or help with, a variety of college activities, including sports and musical events. They know how to behave responsibly in public places. Overall, opportunities for students' social development are very good.
39. Cultural education is very good. Art, drama and music contribute very well to the life of the college. Visits are arranged to the theatre, concerts and art galleries. The religious education department explores a variety of cultures and there has been a successful trip to a synagogue. The modern foreign language department organises exchange visits and an e-mail link with a Spanish school is just about to be established. Musicians have visited Vienna. In physical education, students explore various cultures through dance. The college is not best placed to expose students to a multi-cultural environment, but where this has proved most difficult, experience is being enriched through literature, video and film.
40. Students' moral, social and cultural development was strong at the last inspection and remains so, now. At that time, opportunities for spiritual development were not being taken. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection. Spiritual development is now seen as central to personal development and the thought for the day is a valued way of fulfilling statutory requirements.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Welfare and support arrangements

41. The college is well organised and vigilant about the safety and welfare of its students, as reported at the time of the last inspection. The high level of care that the college provides contributes significantly towards students' performance. Students and parents appreciate this very much. Arrangements for college buses are impeccable and safe. Students are confident that there is a good range of adults to whom they can turn if they have worries or personal concerns. Year 11 and tertiary students act as mentors to younger students, helping those new to the college and also helping younger students with reading. The medical care provided by the two full-time nurses and other trained first-aiders is very good. Health and safety and child protection procedures are correctly in place. Students are well supported by visiting specialists, some through a multi-agency approach.
42. The pastoral system is very well organised. It provides continuity of support throughout the college. Monitoring of attendance, behaviour and homework is thorough and effective. Student planners are consistently and effectively used to record homework and are checked regularly by form tutors. Homework is set on a regular basis. The planners and students' records of achievement (in Key Stage 4) are very helpful in monitoring students' academic performance and personal development. Staff encourage students to have high expectations of what they can achieve and many offer additional help with work out of class and more formally in the study support groups at lunchtimes. Students significantly benefit from the support provided, for example with their coursework in art, and design and technology, for homework in many subjects, and to improve their skills in physical education. The support structure includes behavioural support, academic mentoring for Year 11 students and the extension activities for high attaining students. Support for students with special educational needs is very good and includes outside specialists for particular needs.
43. The college has highly effective systems for promoting good discipline and behaviour. Teachers receive detailed advice on classroom management. The code of conduct is regularly updated and effectively applied. The college takes the lead in discussing oppressive behaviour with students and provides good advice on how to deal with any incidents, including those outside college. Procedures to promote good attendance and punctuality are very effective.

The use of assessment to raise achievement

44. The college's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good overall. Arrangements are thorough for students entering in Year 7, based on the transfer of information from primary schools and a wide range of assessments made in Year 7. Very effective use is made of the information in guiding students into appropriate teaching groups, and providing teachers of each group with comprehensive information on each student. Teachers use this information effectively in planning lessons and guiding individuals: they know their students very well. Work is regularly marked and appropriate records are kept in subject areas. The college policy of using grades for attainment and effort is generally used. However, few subjects inform younger students of their attainment relative to the National Curriculum until the end of Key Stage 3, except in science, some aspects of design and technology and in physical education. Between the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE, subjects regularly assess students' progress relative to GCSE and students understand how they are doing. Year 11 students are proud of their achievement over the key stage and are keen to do well. In the tertiary sector, students understand how they are achieving. Those studying for vocational qualifications like the way the work is assessed, which enables them to plan how to improve.
45. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is uneven across subjects. While satisfactory overall, aspects need improvement. In English, mathematics, science, physical education and some areas of design and technology, departments make systematic use of assessment information in evaluating students' attainment across different aspects of their subject. In other subjects, not enough use is made of assessment information. Assessment arrangements for students with special educational needs are very effective. Links with primary schools are excellent, so teachers understand students' needs as they enter the college. Students' achievements are regularly reviewed and the information gathered gives a broad picture to subject teachers of strengths and weaknesses. Each subject area has a link person for special educational needs, so an overview is gained of students' progress and support across the college. Subject teachers are familiar with students' individual education

plans and targets. In lessons, students are suitably challenged by work which is adapted. They learn and achieve well.

46. Assessment was a Key Issue in the last inspection report. At that time, departments did not implement consistently the college policies for assessment, recording and reporting. This is no longer the case: the policies are now effectively applied. At the time of the last inspection marking was uneven. Again, generally this is now carefully carried out. However now, as then, younger students have much less information about their progress relative to national expectations than older students. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made, but analysis and use of information to raise students' achievement further is an area for development.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The college works successfully with parents and has their confidence. Parents are pleased with the leadership of the college, and the wide range of opportunities and individual care provided for their children. They are very supportive of the college. They value the quality of education provided and standards achieved by students. A small minority of parents replying to the pre-inspection questionnaires was critical of homework, information about how their children are getting on and about college's work with parents. Concerns about homework were equally split between parents who felt there was too much, and those who felt there was not enough. Inspectors found homework is regular and usually appropriately set. Reporting arrangements are satisfactory. Interim profiles, students' planners and consultation meetings supplement the information parents receive in annual reports. Inspectors' findings do not confirm these concerns.
48. As at the time of previous inspection, parents make strong and valuable contributions to the life of the college and their children's education. Parents are well represented and actively involved in the work of the college. The Friends of the College is active and very effective in raising funds. Parents support the sports activities and other functions organised by the college very well. Some parents help in the college resource centre. Student planners are well used by parents as a means of communication between home and college. Attendance at consultation and curricular meetings is high: parents are keen for their children to do well. Parents of students with special educational needs are fully involved in reviewing and identifying their needs. Many parents and prospective parents are linked directly with the college through its community education programme.
49. Information provided for parents by the college is of a high quality. The prospectus and the *College Echo* (the newspaper produced by students) are very well produced and informative. Governors report to parents annually on their work. While the report contains much of interest, it is relatively weak on the required detail about resourcing for students with special educational needs. Parents at their pre-inspection meeting felt that written reports from the college about their children's progress are good, that telephone and letter queries are dealt with promptly, and messages are efficiently referred to the appropriate person. The college has made very effective use of questionnaires to gauge parents' satisfaction with its service. Response to these questionnaires indicates a high level of satisfaction among parents.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

50. Leadership by the principal is outstandingly good. He generates a strong sense of purpose, expressed in the aims of the college as opportunity, endeavour, achievement and excellence. Leadership was described as outstanding at the time of the last inspection and has gone from strength to strength. Over the last four years the college roll has increased by over 200 students, the accommodation has been improved substantially and examination results, which were already good, have improved broadly in line with the national trend. Teamwork, both within the senior management team and across the college as a whole, is very good. Within this very large college there is a dual focus on achievement and success, and care and support for individuals. Emphasis on teaching and learning is very effective. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now very good.

51. The governing body is deeply committed to the college as a provider of educational opportunities for young people, within the context of the whole community. Governors have very high expectations and have fully supported the college in seeking national recognition for its ventures, including the Charter Mark for excellence in public service. Governors are vigilant in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and monitoring college performance. They have detailed knowledge of work in departments. Individual governors contribute specialist expertise, including in the fields of personnel management, outdoor education, financial accounting and construction engineering. Governors have spearheaded improvements in sports facilities and the use of student and parent questionnaires to gauge satisfaction with the service provided and how improvements could be made.
52. The governing body annually sets performance targets for the principal. Appraisal arrangements are in place for all staff. Information on results and teaching is evaluated and contributes to planning for improvement. College development planning is detailed, analytical and well-focused. The college is well aware of its substantial strengths and areas which could be improved. Heads of department have been charged with making effective use of a range of statistical information on each student, to further raise standards. Departmental plans adopt the same general format as the overall college plan. For each priority, or target for action, responsibility and funding are identified. The planning is very well synchronised so that the college as a whole moves forward.
53. The college was very well managed at the time of the last inspection, and remains so, now. Arrangements are clear and business-like. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated, with the two deputy principals having significant responsibility for the day-to-day running of the college, both subject and pastoral aspects. Good account is taken of the community context and financial planning through inclusion of the director of community education and the senior administrative officer on the senior management team. Links and consultation arrangements across the college are excellent, through year and departmental responsibilities, the staff handbook, bulletins and regular meetings. Responsibilities for college priorities are clearly identified, for example for sports, special educational needs and more able students, and these aspects are co-ordinated well. Excellent communication among staff enables teachers to know and respond to students' individual needs. High quality administrative, learning resources and managerial support enable teachers to do their work well.
54. The college makes excellent strategic use of its resources. Over the last few years very large budgets have been used to improve accommodation. In the last financial year, expenditure on new accommodation exceeded income, resulting in a relatively small deficit, which is reduced this year and will be eliminated in the next year. The financial benefit of Sports College status has been very well used in improving facilities at the college, for the benefit of students, the community and joint work with primary schools. Levels of literacy, numeracy, scientific understanding and fitness among Year 6 and Year 7 students have improved significantly. The benefits are directly linked to the criteria for Sports College funding. The college supplements, through its own funds, the income for students with special educational needs; they benefit from extra support and learn and achieve well.
55. Senior managers and governors are scrupulous in pursuing best value. The quality of new buildings and their furnishing are evidence of this. New contracts are carefully negotiated. Best value from funds for information and communications technology is achieved by the construction of computers, at cost, within the college by very able technical staff. Routine use is made of standard information technology for administration. The amount of money coming into the college for each student is below average, even when account is taken of the benefit of Sports College funding. The proportions spent on Key Stages 3 and 4 are broadly appropriate, although tertiary spending is well within the delegated budget: there is scope for spending more. It is anticipated that curricular changes to be introduced in September 2000 will account for this. Bearing in mind the rich learning experience offered, together with very good teaching, the generally high standards achieved, with examples of excellence in several areas, the college provides very good value for money, and the tertiary sector is effective.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

56. The college is well staffed. While the number of teachers is high, equivalent to 100.9 full-time members of staff, it is a little below average given the size of this large college, and the

teachers work hard, both through timetabled lessons and by giving freely of their own time, at lunchtimes and for extra-curricular activities. The number of teachers is sufficient to include a good range of specialists. They are effectively deployed to make the most of their considerable expertise and experience which contribute well to the good educational standards achieved. The work of the college is ably supported by a team of well-qualified non-teaching staff. Work as an Investors in People organisation has strengthened and supported the role of non-teaching staff. They contribute a great deal to the smooth running of the college and to the learning of the students. The inadequacy of technicians noted in the last inspection has been rectified. Newly qualified teachers and staff new to the college are well supported by a programme of induction. Professional development arrangements, managed primarily within the college, are extensive and closely linked to the college's development plans. The college benefits from extensive links with providers of training in the region and is itself contributing to the initial training of teachers and to regional training in information and communications technology.

57. The college enjoys excellent accommodation which is much improved since the previous inspection. Specialist provision for design and technology, science, mathematics, information and communications technology and art is outstandingly good. Sports College status has led to greatly improved facilities for physical education, both indoors and outdoors: they are excellent. Governors and senior staff of the college have worked assiduously to pursue funding and manage an extensive (and continuing) building programme. The new Millennium Block includes a suite of mathematics rooms, excellent accommodation for tertiary students with social areas, study rooms and good access to information and communications technology. The reception area for parents is welcoming and attractive and includes interview rooms. The new dining room, which is both stylish and functional, is well used at lunchtimes, and provides useful meeting and additional classroom space. The grounds and buildings are well maintained. High quality displays of students' work in subject and central areas, especially some outstanding displays of art, in two- and three-dimensions, contribute to a stimulating environment for learning.
58. The very good quality and range of resources in departments contribute to the good standards achieved. The attractive, centrally located multi-media resources centre effectively supports learning across the curriculum. It is well used by departments and students make good use of its facilities, including information and communications technology. A club, at the end of the college day, organised by tertiary students and both teaching and support staff offers additional support for younger students. The book stock is satisfactory and has been increased since the last inspection, when it was below average. Reading for enjoyment and for information is well promoted by a range of initiatives through the year, such as book sales, a college book week and a 'Books and Beyond' project with the English department. Provision for information and communications technology is much improved since the last inspection and currently provides good access for most subjects. Substantial further investment, to be made in the near future, will alleviate the need for students in larger groups to share machines, and provide more facilities for physical education and music. The management of resources is very effective and contributes to the good standards achieved by the college and to the quality of the services.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. *To further raise the standards of work and attainment of students, and continue its move towards excellence, the governors, principal, senior management team and staff should:*
- improve the consistency and clarity with which assessment is used to improve standards in subjects (see paragraphs 44 to 46).
60. Assessment was included as a key issue in the last report and, while substantial progress has been made in its use to guide individuals, not enough use is made of it for planning curricular improvements. In addition to the preceding key issue, a less important weakness, about lessons at Key Stage 3 in modern foreign languages, should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan. This is indicated in paragraph 156.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Community links

61. The college has a clear vision of its place in the local community both as a resource for the community, and as a provider of high quality education and support which enrich the lives of people in Ivybridge and the surrounding villages. The quality of community provision is excellent; it is greatly valued by those involved. The community education team is well led and managed and is marked by enthusiasm and a breadth of vision which enhances the college and the community it serves. Appropriate opportunities are provided for people of all ages, abilities and levels of interest.
62. Community links were well organised and effective at the time of the last inspection, and their role has strengthened. Departments across the college contribute to the community dimension, including art, music, science and physical education. Links with local primary schools have been greatly strengthened. Last year the science department involved 5000 people in scientific activity, through student projects in the centre of Ivybridge. Enhanced sports facilities have made the college a nucleus for local activities. The college is a model of excellent practice.
63. The college welcomes adult learners into its tertiary provision and similarly welcomes tertiary students into the many opportunities afforded by the community programme. Young people are able to see that learning is a life-long experience and benefit from the differences in teaching and learning skills. It was a pleasure to see tertiary students taking part in a fast moving A level course in psychology one evening, where they were learning not just subject specific skills, but also something of the commitment needed to cope with only one extended teaching session a week. The variety of provision means that a wide cross section of adults in the community feels that they have an ownership of the college. The provision of leisure courses, many accredited, provides a valuable service. Courses that service the hospitality industry (how to run a bed and breakfast establishment) and to support those with children (parenting skills) are popular options.
64. The college now has a physical presence in the community. Basic skills programmes are established in the villages. An adult learning centre has been established in the shopping precinct of Ivybridge, where information and communications technology skills are taught to a wide range of students. This includes the local business community, and groups of senior citizens, in a project developed with Help the Aged. Some initiatives, such as a community library on the edge of Dartmoor, and a Play-work project, are now managed by the community itself; the college has become an initiator for community development and an agent for improvement.
65. Alongside these initiatives the youth service enables local groups and agencies to meet and work together and is now seeking to establish premises to provide a base for young people in the area. The youth co-ordinator also teaches in mainstream education, which strengthens the link with the college. The breadth of challenging opportunities for young people is impressive and enhances the already excellent provision of extra-curricular and sporting activities provided by the college in other ways. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Saturday workshops and the link with the Dame Hannah Rogers School have brought special benefits to students at the college and elsewhere, some of whom live in outlying districts. Family workshops involve pre-school children. Through the community education team in college, Ivybridge and District Parenting Education Project maintains links with a variety of related bodies, and has been fortunate in attracting its own funding.
66. The community team is in close touch with a wide variety of external agencies, both local and national bodies. The college and its students benefit through these networks. The college was an integral part of a recent Ivybridge Arts Week, is involved with initiatives with older citizens, and is both a source of paid employment as well as a recipient of much voluntary help from within the community. The college has a holistic and inclusive view of its place within Ivybridge and its environs, and is outstandingly successful in its community provision.

Spanish

67. Spanish is included in the report on modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish), in Part D of this report. About 25 per cent of students choose to study Spanish from Year 7, and students in two upper attaining French classes begin to learn Spanish as an extra

language in Year 9. In the past, Spanish has been a more popular choice of language amongst average and lower attaining students; no Spanish class in Key Stage 4 has been identified as upper ability in departmental documentation, whereas there are several such classes in French and German. However, the numbers now opting for Spanish in Key Stage 3 have increased and there seems to be a similar range of ability to that of students taking the other languages. Although GCSE results in Spanish have been below the national average over the last three years, largely due to the poor performance of boys, students do broadly as well in Spanish as in their other subjects. Standards are improving, and estimated grades for students in Year 11 suggest that results in Spanish will be similar this year to those for French and German. Encouraging numbers of students are choosing to study Spanish to A level, and they are embarking on this course with better GCSE grades than their predecessors. Tertiary students achieve well in lessons, and they are on course to achieve better results at A level than recent results, which have been variable, would suggest. Teaching and learning are good overall. Foreign language assistants help students improve their use of the spoken language. Students have made visits to Spain, including a recent celebration of dance. Links with Spain are being strengthened, for example, through e-mail, and work experience opportunities are being established in Tarragona, for older students. Provision for Spanish is effective.

Tertiary sector

68. The college offers very good choice of A levels from the 24 subjects provided, and several subjects are also provided at Advanced Supplementary (A/S) level. Many subjects are operating modular schemes, which further increase student choice. Alongside the A and A/S level courses, a limited range of vocational courses is provided. These include several General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) at intermediate and advanced levels in business studies and a National Diploma in sports studies, which has been recently introduced and not yet awarded.
69. Almost three-quarters of the students continue from Year 11 into the tertiary sector. A small number of Year 12 students re-enter GCSE in mathematics, English or science in an attempt to improve their previous grades. Results obtained at A level are broadly average; results for modules already completed and predicted grades for the current students indicate that future results are set to improve. Results for vocational courses have been well above the national average. Progression into higher education is very good.
70. The tutorial and general studies programme followed by all tertiary students is appropriate and effective. This includes careers education and guidance, preparation for higher education and health education. The programme is well supported by college staff and outside speakers. Tertiary students are encouraged to undertake work experience and it is estimated that during the last academic year about half of the students took advantage of this. Over three-quarters of the current Year 12 students are taking general studies at A level and this extends their range of experiences and understanding. It is planned that all A level students will undertake this course from September 2000. The range of additional opportunities available, many fostered through community education links, is extensive. Tertiary students are encouraged and able to support provision for younger students, including the running of activities and clubs during lunch times. The completion of the new Millennium Block means that tertiary students have access to excellent resources. Overall, the students respond well to a more relaxed and adult environment.
71. The tertiary sector is effective. Since the time of the last inspection, the size of this has grown in terms of student numbers. Provision of A level subjects remains about the same. The range of vocational courses at intermediate level has been reduced, though collaboration with local colleges of further education is good and students, including some with special educational needs, progress onto appropriate courses there. The college plans to extend the vocational offer from September 2000, to include GNVQ courses in art and science at advanced level.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	280
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	27	39	23	2	0	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Tertiary
Number of pupils on the college's roll	1546	337
Number of full-time students eligible for free college meals	201	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Tertiary
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	35	0
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	280	11

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

Student mobility in the last college year	No of pupils
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	3.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999 (1998)	154 (135)	137 (136)	291 (271)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	99 (33)	114 (101)	111 (105)
	Girls	110 (118)	103 (103)	98 (92)
	Total	209 (211)	217 (204)	209 (197)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	72 (78)	75 (75)	72 (73)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	36 (41)	49 (41)	29 (41)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	98 (92)	97 (105)	107 (111)
	Girls	112 (116)	90 (108)	99 (100)
	Total	210 (208)	187 (213)	206 (211)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	73 (77)	65 (79)	72 (78)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	33 (41)	31 (41)	36 (39)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999 (1998)	114 (144)	151 (139)	265 (283)

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	56 (81)	113 (141)	114 (143)
	Girls	103 (92)	149 (135)	151 (138)
	Total	159 (173)	262 (276)	265 (281)
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	60 (61)	99 (98)	100 (99)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	40.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	43 (41.7)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the tertiary sector

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999 (1998)	74 (62)	61 (70)	(135) (132)

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	15.2 (14.8)	16.0 (15.6)	15.6 (15.3)	1.7 (2.3)	2.0 (1.8)	1.8 (2.1)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for advanced vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	10	80
	National		82
Number in their final year of studying for intermediate vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	18	94
	National		73

Ethnic background of students

(of compulsory school age)

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	1541
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	42	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	100.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	915

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	3,974,001
Total expenditure	4,048,288
Expenditure per student	2,252
Balance brought forward from previous year	34,938
Balance carried forward to next year	- 39,349

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	2766
Number of questionnaires received	1387

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	59	38	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in college.	55	41	3	1	0
Behaviour in the college is good.	53	42	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	49	13	1	2
The teaching is good.	50	46	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	40	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	62	34	2	1	1
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	29	1	0	0
The college works closely with parents.	45	43	9	1	2
The college is well led and managed.	66	31	1	0	2
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	40	2	1	1
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	28	1	0	3

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very supportive of the college and think highly of its services and the standards it achieves. They feel that expectations are very high, that students are known individually and helped to do their best. They appreciate the forward-looking and effective management, the many and varied opportunities provided and say their children like the college. The concerns parents expressed were virtually always coupled with praise about overall standards. Small but significant minorities of parents expressed concern about the ways in which the college works with parents and the information they receive. Inspection evidence does not confirm these general concerns. The quality and range of information provided, and opportunities for regular communication are good. Parents also expressed concern about homework: both about too much being set and also about too little in some groups. Inspectors found homework set regularly and generally in good amounts. Students, when talking with inspectors, said they understood that if they were concerned they could discuss the amounts set with their teachers. Many parents said that links with primary schools are excellent and enable their children to settle quickly into the college and make the most of its many opportunities.

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

ENGLISH

72. Standards in English are above average overall, and well above average by the end of Key Stage 4. In the tertiary sector, standards are in line with expectations for A level. Students achieve well in English.
73. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the results in the National Curriculum tests in English were above the national average, and the average for schools of similar intake. In the period 1996-1999, results were generally well above average but fell slightly in 1999. Results in English in 1999 were not as good as those in mathematics and science, though usually they are similar or better. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades (A*-C) in the 1999 GCSE examination in English was well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Results have improved steadily over the past three years. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades A*/A in 1999 was significantly higher than in 1998. In English literature, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades (A*-C) in 1999 was a little above the national average. The number of A*/A grades gained and students' average achievement in this examination improved significantly. The college entered more students for literature than ever before. Students' results in English language and in literature were broadly similar to their results in other subjects. Results in English in 1999 were better than in mathematics, but not as good as in science. Results for A level in 1999 were in line with the national average and similar to those of recent years, though there were fewer A/B grades than usual. Girls tend to perform better in English examinations than boys, but in lessons no difference in achievement was observed.
74. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in English were above average. Students speak clearly and confidently, in standard English where appropriate, and command a wide vocabulary. They listen very carefully. Students read aloud accurately, and with effective timing. They use lively expression when conveying speech or reading a playscript – as in a Year 9 class studying *Romeo and Juliet*, where students conveyed Shakespearean language successfully. Students have a very good range of writing skills, which helps them with creative, reflective and discursive writing, research into the Elizabethan theatre, book reviews and newspaper articles. Higher attaining students write impressively in response to poems they have read – for example, Scannell's *A Case of Murder* and Heaney's *Early Purges*. Paragraphing is very good, spelling accurate and vocabulary well used. Punctuation within a sentence is sometimes missed. Middle and lower attaining students do not always link ideas smoothly and their style becomes jerky. Presentation is very good, and benefits from students' use of information and communications technology.
75. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average. Students sustain speech well using precise vocabulary and with a keen sense of audience. Listening skills are highly developed. Reading aloud is fluent and accurate with variation of pace. Most students appreciate implicit meaning, as when discussing poems from an examination board's anthology, though lower attaining students tend to take words literally. Students write well and many sustain accuracy for several paragraphs in several different styles. They use a wide range of vocabulary. Their use of paragraphs and sentence structure is very good. Punctuation and spelling are good. Drafting helps to eradicate errors. Students write sensitively about literature – for example, about Ted Hughes' *Hawk Roosting*. They show a broad understanding of character, as when writing about Lady Macbeth. Students make clear comparisons between texts such as Hardy's *Withered Arm* and Charlotte Gilman's *Turned* and the two films of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Quotations are carefully selected to make points, though not always fully explained. Comments on texts can be too general to be effective.
76. Standards in the tertiary sector are in line with expectations for A level English. Students are highly articulate; for example, they discuss Carole Ruman's poetry with authority and sensitivity. They read aloud with appropriate pitch and pace – as when studying Heaney's *The Toone Road* and Mahon's *Derry Morning* - and through group discussions, they show a firm grasp of the poems' meanings. Written work has many good features. Students write perceptively about Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. They

structure essays well and write accurately. Sometimes, however, statements on characters lack textual support and, when writing on a play, students do not always appreciate its dramatic significance.

77. Students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well. From average attainment on entry, students' results are above average by the end of Key Stage 3 and well above average by the end of Key Stage 4. In the tertiary sector, students generally achieve results which are at least in line with their capabilities. In their time at college, students improve their breadth of vocabulary, accuracy of expression in English and their appreciation of its literature.
78. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Results at Key Stage 3 were average then, and are now above average. In GCSE English language, results have risen from somewhat above average to well above average. Although literature results are lower than language, the number of students studying literature has significantly increased, and many more lower attaining students now take the GCSE examination. Literature results, overall, are a little above the national average. In the tertiary sector, results are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.
79. The quality of teaching is very good, as is the quality of learning. Teaching is nearly always at least good. It is very good, occasionally excellent, in just over two-fifths of lessons. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, overall. The quality of teaching is a great strength of the English department. It enables students to learn very well and encourages very positive attitudes and impeccable behaviour from most students.
80. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of English are very good, which helps students to make considerable gains in knowledge of literature. During the inspection, for example, Year 8 classes were rapidly increasing their understanding of Shakespeare by studying the witches' speeches in *Macbeth* or acting out the mechanicals' play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Teachers make good use of the Internet to enable students to learn about Elizabethan theatre and to enhance the standard of word processing notes, with illustrations. Teachers' planning is very good. It focuses on basic skills, such as spelling and vocabulary enrichment, and provides an interesting variety of activities to keep students on task. Occasionally, insufficient time is given to consolidation of learning at the end of a lesson, and this restricts progress – or, an activity with a lower attaining group goes on for too long, and students lose concentration. Relationships are excellent. Students co-operate very well with the teachers and collaborate effectively in group-work. Students are courteous and considerate to others. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, students in pairs read their poems to each other and then to the whole class. This celebration of their work helped students to learn how to improve their writing. Teachers match work closely to students' capabilities and this raises attainment. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher used differentiated extracts from Dahl's *Danny the Champion of the World* to develop reading and writing skills. Students who had attended the literacy summer school held at the college were making particularly good progress. Teachers promote very good independent learning skills in group work. For example, Year 12 students in pairs discussed tension in a chapter of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Discussion helped students to get to grips with the text and they were absorbed in their work. Teachers use time and resources very well. For example, in a Year 11 group, where students were preparing an essay comparing Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter* and Conan Doyle's *The Speckled Band*, the teachers' support material enabled students to work at a rapid pace in structuring their answers. The learning support assistant attached to the department, and the information and communications technology technician, gave valuable individual help to students in separate rooms. As a result, students understood the work better and concentrated very well. Behaviour was exemplary and students' sincere appreciation of one another's efforts – in particular, the impressive poetry written by one student – increased their self-confidence. Teachers' use of assessment in lessons is very good. Instant feedback to students is leading to a distinct improvement in standards, which is enhanced by opportunities given to students to comment in writing on their own progress. Work is very conscientiously marked with comments indicating how students can move on. Homework is regularly set and skilfully planned to extend students' learning.
81. The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing a very good range of learning opportunities. Provision for literacy is very good. Many initiatives help students to improve reading – for example, regular silent reading in class, paired reading with Year 7 and Year 12, and book

week. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Learning support assistants help students to focus closely on language. A few lower attaining students in Year 11 are given appropriate guidance in preparation for a Certificate in English course, rather than GCSE. Gifted and talented students are provided with challenging work which really makes them think. Assessment procedures are very good. Teachers use the information the college collates on prior attainment to provide suitable work for students – this is raising standards. Work in the department makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In literature lessons, discussion frequently centres on how characters behave – for example, the Birlings in *An Inspector Calls* – and the emphasis on pre-twentieth century literature gives students a broad view of their literary heritage. The reading of multi-cultural works – for example, poems from other cultures – increases students' knowledge and understanding of different ways of life.

82. The head of department provides very strong leadership. All teachers work closely as a team and are committed to raising attainment. The subject development plan has clear objectives which are based on evaluation of results and very carefully identified to help students' learning – for example, on raising boys' attainment and on further developing the already good use of information and communications technology. The department is well resourced, and accommodation arranged as a suite makes communications between staff easier. Excellent wall displays celebrate students' achievement and clearly reflect the high standards promoted in English – for example, a lower attaining Year 8 class presented some very inspiring work, excellently illustrated, on the poem *Five Ways to Kill a Man*.

Literacy

83. The standard of literacy in the college is above the national average. In English, students speak very clearly using standard English where appropriate. Listening skills are highly developed. Students read accurately and expressively, particularly when interpreting play scripts. They write in a wide variety of forms. Standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally good, though lower attaining students find it difficult to sustain accuracy. Opportunities are provided in many lessons across the curriculum for students to develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Students are articulate in discussion, and very keen listeners. In physical education, for example, students listen carefully to their teachers and communicate very well when evaluating performance. In the tertiary sector, students' oral skills are particularly good – this helps students to understand better what they are doing as, for example, in design technology and theatre studies. Students read fluently and confidently. They have a clear understanding of the text – this helps them to learn rapidly. Teachers mark written work carefully and have high expectations of technical accuracy. This promotes high standards of literacy. Opportunities in history, geography and science enable students to write at length and their work is commendable. In Year 7, students in science write creatively and with verve about the respiratory system. One student read aloud her work with great enjoyment during a group discussion with an inspector. Key words help students to extend vocabulary and spelling skills in, for example, religious education and GNVQ work, though they are underused in geography. Students are good at making notes, for example, in science and drama.

MATHEMATICS

84. The standards students reach in mathematics are above average and represent good achievement overall, in light of students' standards on entry which are average. Since the last inspection report GCSE results have steadily improved and results at A level, which are commendable, have been maintained.
85. Standards in mathematics are above average throughout. Results of the National Curriculum tests in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well above the average when compared with the average both of all schools nationally and with similar schools. Boys performed marginally better than girls at the highest level. Teachers' assessments were much lower than the test results; their forecasts of students' performance were cautious. At GCSE, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades, (A*-C), in 1999 was well above the average when compared with both all schools nationally and with similar schools. The proportion of students who gained the highest grades (A*/A) was outstandingly good at twice

the national average. Teachers raised their expectations of students and more were entered for the higher tiers in the GCSE. Students' motivation improved as a consequence of the new graduated assessment examination course used throughout the department. Across the full range of grades, (A* - G), the standards achieved by students were above the national average. All students were entered for the examination. Girls' performed better than boys in the highest grades which was the reverse of that in 1998. Results at A level are consistently good. In 1999 more than half the students in mathematics gained the highest grades (A, B) and results overall were above the national average.

86. In mathematics lessons, and in the work seen at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, attainment covers a wide range and, overall, is above the average. Students in the highest sets attain well above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, students understand and competently use number operations in a variety of contexts, for example, they calculate percentages and area and volume of two-dimensional shapes with formulae. Aspects of data-handling are well understood. Students collect and record data in tables and charts, represent data using a variety of graphs and develop an analytical approach from which they draw conclusions. Higher attaining students can determine the probability outcomes of two experiments using two-way tables and tree-diagrams. Students from the lowest sets have difficulties when applying new learning to problem-solving, for example, using properties of angles to find other angles. By the end of Key Stage 4, students gain further knowledge and skills in number and algebraic applications in a wider range of contexts; for example, considering and calculating gradients of straight and curved line graphs. Higher attaining students effectively use more complex formulae, for example, to calculate the standard deviation of data. Students from the lowest sets, including those with special educational needs, improve learning skills through systematic methods and also from the constant encouragement and support from teachers and classroom assistants. Standards in the tertiary sector are above average. Students display a wide knowledge of mathematical ideas and competently apply their learning and computational skills to solve statistical and practical problems; for example, expansion of the binomial theorem and determining the centre of mass in two dimensions.
87. Teaching is good and occasionally very good; it is most effective in Key Stage 4 and the tertiary sector. Teachers develop very good relationships with students. Classroom management skills are very good. Teachers are understanding and caring and this encourages students to develop good learning attitudes and achieve high standards. Occasionally, with the groups in which most students have special educational needs or behavioural difficulties, teaching strategies are less effective in motivating the students and controlling incidents of challenging behaviour. Teachers are well qualified and possess very good subject knowledge. They give competent explanations of the subject and devise challenging activities to develop understanding and deepen students' knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 class, students not only discussed in pairs how to find the dimensions of a three-dimensional shape given a specified volume, but also calculated the dimensions and constructed the shape. The students were interested, sustained high levels of concentration and collaborated well. Procedures for assessing students' attainment levels are good; units of work are regularly assessed including tests and the results used to monitor the progress of individuals. Homework is regularly set and often challenging. Teachers keep up with the marking of both coursework and homework. Some teachers write constructive comments for students on how best to improve their levels of attainment, but this practice is not consistently used throughout the department.
88. The department is efficiently led and managed. The development plan centres on plans to raise attainment levels of students further by improving areas of the curriculum. However, schemes of work are not complete at Key Stages 3 and 4 and there is none at A level. The monitoring of the teaching and learning within the department is given some emphasis and time has recently been allocated to carry this out. It has yet to be evaluated. Teachers work hard and all share in the work of the department. They give of their time freely in providing extra-curricular activities; students have opportunities to join master-classes and participate in mathematical challenges as well as revision and support groups at lunchtimes. These opportunities extend students' knowledge and help them improve their understanding. Accommodation is of a very high quality and is further enhanced by displays of students' work. The provision and quality of learning resources are very good; a good range of textbooks and easy access to computers means that students are well supported in their learning.

89. Both teaching and learning have improved well since the last inspection. At that time, teaching was good in half the lessons: it is now generally good, with some very good teaching. Learning has similarly improved. Effective use is made of computers to enhance the learning of mathematics: at the time of the last inspection they were little used. Teamwork within the department has improved. At the time of the last inspection there was a larger number of staff to co-ordinate. Teachers are developing a numeracy initiative at Key Stage 3 to build on the primary schools' practice and improve students' confidence and skill in number practices.

Numeracy

90. Standards of numeracy are good overall. Numeracy skills are being systematically developed in mathematics throughout Key Stage 3. Younger students enjoy the tasks and challenges provided and on the whole are confident in using number operations. Students in the lowest sets have difficulties in developing strategies to remember multiplication tables. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have a more secure grasp of number as well as improved graphical skills. They are competent users of calculators. Students in the highest sets effectively use graphical calculators. Most subjects contribute well to developing students' numerical skills. In vocational subjects in Key Stage 4 and the tertiary sector, standards are good: number operations are used to calculate costs and percentages and the older students interpret data from graphs in the analysis of findings. Statistical methods are used in geography to good effect. In science, numeracy is developed throughout the key stages in calculating formulae and using a variety of graphs, including lines of best fit. Activities in art contribute to the development of students' spatial awareness, for example, of perspective and enlargement.

SCIENCE

91. Standards in science are well above average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average at the end of the tertiary sector. Students achieve well in science.
92. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, students' results in National Curriculum tests in science were well above the national average. Analysis of students' written work and lesson observation confirms this is the case. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in science are well above the national average at the higher grades (A*-C). These very good results have been constant in recent years and, on the evidence of the inspection, look set to continue. All students are entered for double award science, and virtually all gain a certificate. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 boys and girls do equally well. Performance in science, at the end of both key stages, exceeds that in English or mathematics.
93. The standards at the end of the tertiary sector, taken across the three sciences, are broadly in line with national averages for the highest grades (A, B), but exceed them across the full range of grades. Attainment is highest in chemistry where, in 1999, half the students gained the highest grades (A, B). Similar results have been achieved ever since the current syllabus was adopted. Standards in physics are broadly in line with those found nationally. In biology, there is more fluctuation from year to year and in 1999 results at the highest grades dropped to well below the national average. However, analysis of the current students' work and observation in lessons suggests that the present standards are much closer to the national average.
94. Most students enter the college at about the standard expected in science, but having covered widely different topics. Students' achievement through Key Stage 3 is good, and is initiated by revisiting the Key Stage 2 work to fill any gaps and to reinforce knowledge. For instance, Year 7 students reconsider food chains and webs and then go on to understand pyramids of number and biomass, together with looking at the flow of energy through ecosystems. As they progress through the key stage there is a steady increase in the range and extent of their knowledge and skills. Achievement is especially rapid in experimental science, where students acquire many useful skills in planning, carrying out and recording experiments. This is exemplified by the work of Year 9 on the chemical reactivity series, where students confidently and competently investigate the reactions of metals with acids and with air by burning. They become more confident in expressing what they have seen in their own words and develop useful computer skills to aid their science. For example, Year 8 students, in their work on parachute design, generated a graph and recorded it in their results using appropriate computer applications.

95. Students' achievement in Key Stage 4 is very good. As they progress through the key stage their depth and breadth of appreciation of topics steadily increases. They develop a perceptive and questioning approach. Year 11 students investigating the effect of caffeine on heart rate and reaction time understood the importance of taking account of dependent and independent variables, in order to improve the accuracy of their investigations. They make increasing use of computer skills to support their work in science. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, students with special educational needs are well known to their teachers, who adapt work in lessons to suit their needs: as a result they mostly progress as well as their peers. Higher attaining students are challenged by more demanding work.
96. In the tertiary sector, students are presented with more advanced work and take more responsibility for their own learning. They make rapid progress towards an analytical, productive and questioning approach: this is especially evident in chemistry and in areas of physics such as optics. For example, in a lesson on the structure and function of the eye, students were challenged to formulate their own ideas all of the time. They responded well, by reasoning from first principles and also by presenting many questions of their own.
97. Students throughout the college clearly enjoy and take a pride in their science, especially investigative work. They behave well and work hard. Their interest in the subject is clearly evident in the questions they ask. They learn well, because the quality of teaching in science is good: no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In over a third of the lessons teaching was very good with the remainder favourably split between good and satisfactory. All lessons are effectively planned and start with ensuring that what was learned last time is checked. Lessons include a wide variety of strategies to maximise learning and interest. The balance and relationship between practical and theory are good. In the best lessons, students are extensively involved, and by skilful questioning, teachers draw out their knowledge, amplify it and synthesise it to extend their learning. When practical work is introduced, students are involved in experimental design and this increases their understanding of scientific investigation. Apparatus is handled with respect and increasing precision. In lessons which are satisfactory, rather than good, students are questioned, but not involved enough in generating ideas, for example, they complete worksheets mechanically. In practical work they follow a recipe, with little understanding, to prove what they already know. Overall, however, both teaching and learning are purposeful and very effective.
98. A very effective head of department leads a cohesive, imaginative and hard working team of teachers and technicians. All National Curriculum programmes of study and examination requirements are fully covered by excellent schemes of work, which are so arranged that the less able student is suitably challenged and the most able is given access to the highest grades. Very good use is made of the regular assessment to monitor student progress, and to inform students, teachers and parents so that any difficulties that become apparent can be addressed. Links with primary schools are excellent. Large numbers of primary pupils are invited to the college and there are visits to primary schools by staff and students. Links with colleges and universities are also good and here, too, there are reciprocal visits.
99. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Standards have risen in line with standards nationally at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, and remained above them. Results at A level have remained broadly the same; chemistry now is particularly strong. Literacy and numeracy are still good. There has been a big advance in computer skills and their application to science. The use of assessment to identify and to rectify individual problems is much improved. Extra-curricular provision has continued to expand and to enhance the students' experience as scientists.
100. The curriculum is well balanced and enormously enriched by a very wide range of opportunities. A very good programme of visits, such as those to the observatory, and Faraday Lectures and field courses bring science to life and help raise attainment. The arrangements for able students include such things as courses on astronomy run by an astronomer. The Liverpool Curriculum Enrichment project allows students to develop their own ideas, such as making paper and synthesising new fuels. The Community Science Programme gives the opportunity to work with the public: activities have included writing and distributing a booklet on the eclipse, sponsored by the British Association, also booklets for primary schools. Last year five thousand members of the public were involved in student-led projects, some of which took place in the shopping centre and others in the college laboratories. Every lunchtime staff are

available in the resource centre to help students with any problems and to allow them computer access. It is not surprising that such rich provision by a very committed staff has enabled students to progress so well. It has, of course, promoted some very good academic results; it is run to allow students to realise their potential as scientists. It is very clear that the department cares for and likes its students. The science department is a major strength of the college.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

101. The standards achieved by students in information and communications technology at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation. In the formal assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, girls did better than boys; their results were well above expectations. Standards are broadly in line with the expectation at the end of Key Stage 4 and the tertiary sector. The college has not entered any students for GCSE or A level in information technology in recent years, but in 1997, for the GCSE in information systems, results were about in line with the national average. Students on business courses are successfully entered for certificates in computing. Achievement is satisfactory throughout the college and accelerated in Year 9, where students acquire knowledge and skills systematically, in separately taught lessons.
102. In lessons and work seen at Key Stage 3, standards were all at least in line with national expectations, and mostly higher than this. In a Year 8 modern language lesson, for example, students made very effective use of word-processing and clip-art to help them in their language work. In a Year 9 lesson on information and communication technology, a middle-attaining group of students made effective use of the Internet to search for information; they successfully imported pictures and text with a word document. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are working at, and sometimes above, expected levels: there is very little low attainment. They select appropriate tools and applications for a variety of tasks in their subject work in most subjects including measurement, for example, in science. They are most practised in using word processing, data-bases, spreadsheets and the Internet. In the tertiary sector individual students make effective use of computers in the development of their assignments. On business and vocational courses, tertiary students use computers extensively to help them analyse graphs and other data, as well as to research using the Internet, and present their work. Students' knowledge, understanding and skills relating to modelling, communicating and handling information are more highly developed than those for control. Students on A level courses have satisfactory opportunities to practise their information and communications skills.
103. Students have positive attitudes to information and communications technology and some are enthusiastic. Some students, particularly those of lower ability, become motivated when computers are used to support the work in other subjects. Attendance in classes, with a few minor exceptions, is good. Students are able to sustain concentration and complete the tasks that are set. Behaviour is always of a very high standard. Relationships between students and with teachers are very positive and supportive. Younger students work well collaboratively, when sharing computers. As the students progress through the college they gain in confidence and progress towards becoming autonomous computer users. In the tertiary sector, students are encouraged and able to work independently on computers. Attendance at some classes on vocational courses is low and in a few classes students arrive late, usually after having to walk relatively long distances across the site.
104. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 3 and in the tertiary sector and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teachers plan their lessons well and most have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Appropriate and sensitive support is given to students when they are undertaking practical activities. The management of students is effective and high standards of discipline are maintained. Students are clear about what is expected of them, most are able to sustain concentration and overall they make good progress with the tasks set. However, in some classes, the teacher is not always able to successfully meet the varying needs of individual students. This is particularly the case when larger classes are undertaking practical work. In a limited number of classes, when information technology is used to support teaching and learning in another subject, the skills of the teacher are limited. Formal assessment of information and communications technology is carried out towards the end of Key Stage 3. The college recognises that the new requirements will mean that individual

students will need to be formally assessed at the end of each year throughout Key Stages 3 and 4.

105. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met and students' information and communications skills are progressively developed. Much of this is achieved by the application and use of the technology across a wide range of subjects throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Only during Year 9 do the students have separate lessons on information and communications technology. Significant use is made of computers in a number of subjects relating to modelling, communicating and handling information in a variety of forms. Good use is made of the Internet to search for information. During the inspection, opportunities for students to develop skills relating to control were limited, because equipment was not in place in the new accommodation, but control is well represented in schemes of work. Significant use is made of information and communications technology to support work in the core subjects of English, science and mathematics as well as in other subjects including, in particular, modern foreign languages, art and on vocational courses. Students are encouraged and able to use the computer resources during lunch times and after the normal college day. Use on A level courses is less developed. The college has recognised the need to provide opportunities for the more able and interested students to work towards examinable courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. It is planning to introduce a GCSE certificate in the near future and, in the longer term, an appropriate A level course.
106. Information and communications technology in the college is effectively managed and co-ordinated. This is a challenging task with many of the requirements being met across a wide range of subjects. Schemes of work in subjects contain appropriate references which have been mapped in detail to the requirements. Schemes of work for the separately taught programme in Year 9 are detailed. The work is regularly monitored and reviewed in conjunction with a deputy principal who acts as the line manager. A realistic development plan has been drawn up in conjunction with colleagues across the college. Staff development in information and communications technology is substantial: 55 staff are currently undertaking structured training. The current computer hardware and software provide good access for students in almost all subjects. However, in larger groups students are required to share computers, even during Key Stage 4. The principles of best value are underlined by the fact that the college now uses its own technical staff to construct computers. Accommodation is of high quality and good use is made of students' work as display: the learning environment is stimulating and supportive.
107. The college has made significant progress since the last inspection. The level of information and communications technology activity has increased markedly, throughout the college. Separate lessons during Year 9 have also been introduced. Improvement in the level and quality of computer hardware and software available for students to use has been substantial. The college has recognised the need, alongside these developments, for a structured programme of staff development. The college has also recognised that to maintain the momentum of improvements, there is a need to reduce the requirement for sharing of computers particularly beyond Key Stage 3, to introduce the formal assessment of students throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and to increase the applications used by A level students.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

108. Standards and achievement in religious education are good throughout the college, supported by high quality teaching. Results at GCSE in 1998 and 1999 were just above the national average, and much improved since the time of the last inspection. Teachers' strong concern for individual progress ensures that students are challenged; learning targets are well chosen.
109. By the end of Key Stage 3, students talk confidently about religion. They know a range of facts about several world faiths and understand the importance of rites of passage for individuals and for communities. They have explored some religious texts, and codes of conduct, and talk confidently about the importance of symbolism. Unusually at this age, many are using abstract theological language with understanding. Written work reflects their oral confidence and homework is normally thoughtfully completed.
110. At Key Stage 4, the statutory religious education course is delivered for all students within a programme of social education. By the end of this key stage, students have made very good gains in their knowledge of world faiths and in the application of their knowledge to a range of contemporary moral issues. They do so with confidence and respect for opinions which differ from their own. They are aware of a Christian perspective on issues which may or may not coincide with their own views. A lively exchange was observed, as a result of someone expressing a wish to be married in church, whilst holding no Christian view of marriage.
111. By the end of the tertiary sector, students have developed their skills of debating and discussion and speak with some sophistication about philosophical ideas: for example about the nature of mankind or what we mean by beauty or truth. They have made good progress in understanding abstract ideas and applying them in everyday situations. They have studied some of the thinking of several philosophers, for example Aristotle, Plato and Kant. Students at this stage are confident, articulate young adults who realise the importance of commitment in faith communities and view with understanding and appreciation the ideas of those who differ considerably from themselves. They have a global view on some moral issues, the environment for example, and see themselves as part of a community which has to show responsibility for others and their world. The study of religious education has made a very substantial contribution to their personal development.
112. The quality of teaching is usually very good, and never less than satisfactory. Several lessons observed were excellent, both in content and delivery. Lessons are well prepared, a variety of stimulus material is effectively used and teachers are confident in their approach, maintaining a good pace. The range and depth of teacher knowledge contribute substantially to successful delivery. Some lessons are exciting in the way that they challenge students to think in symbolic terms and with theological insight. The universal importance of story as a conveyer of truth is thus enhanced by seeing beyond mere narrative to the truths that lie behind it. Special educational needs students are well supported and the able are challenged. To enrich even further, what is sometimes inspirational teaching, students need to have their confidence built as independent learners who can research for themselves. Building up library resources and encouraging access to the Internet are part of this. While there is some evidence of the use of information and communications technology, it could be developed further. Good use is made of video as a learning tool and some tapes enhance the understanding of religious communities which are not easy to access in this part of Devon. Assessment procedures are sound and the pilot project in Year 9, in which curriculum levels are associated with the Devon Agreed Syllabus, is proving to be a useful tool for the raising of standards. Students' behaviour is excellent and their concentration and application mean that they readily access what is being offered them. It is rare for a student not to have made noticeable progress by the end of each lesson. They not only ask questions but volunteer opinions or venture theories without any hesitancy. They listen carefully to each other. This atmosphere, in which students feel free to conjecture, enables real learning to take place.
113. Since the last inspection good progress has been made. Statutory requirements are now met, achievement is steadily improving and assessment is beginning to assist this process. It is more difficult for the department to enable students to appreciate, by direct contact, the richness and variety of British cultures, but a start has been made and, where direct contact is not possible, artefacts and video are filling some of the gaps. A trip to a synagogue proved successful. This is a good, well managed department, set to expand as general studies comes fully on line in the tertiary sector and numbers rise in the main school.

ART

114. Standards in art at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are above the national expectation. GCSE and A level results have been above the national average each year since the last inspection. In 1999, results were not quite as good as in previous years, but they were still a little above average. The slight dip was due to the disruption caused by the move into new accommodation. The numbers of students studying the subject both for GCSE and A level continue to steadily increase. This year, twenty-four students are taking A level art, and twenty are taking A level photography; results are predicted to be considerably above the national average. Girls generally do better than boys, as nationally, though in 1999, the gap was wider than usual. Overall, the high quality of work in art produced by individual students, especially those who are lower attaining, compares very favourably with their work in other subjects. Students are achieving highly. Exhibitions are held of students' work and regularly some progress to study art at college or university and on to related professions,
115. Across Key Stage 3, students' work indicates that they have a clear understanding of basic art elements including line, tone, shape, texture, and colour, and know how to use them in a wide variety of two- and three-dimensional applications. Drawing from direct observation forms the basis of most projects and, overall, is above the expected standard. Students use their knowledge and understanding of the work of significant artists and art movements to advance their own ideas, working with confidence in a thoughtful analytical way, to develop images with powerful originality and expression. Work in clay is highly imaginative and well made, showing a good understanding of the properties of the medium. Computer-aided design and photography are exceptionally well integrated with drawing and painting projects, and students work freely in these areas, to produce highly creative work. Year 7 students make delightful ceramic birds. Year 8 consider how artists since the Renaissance have used various types of perspective to give depth. They then develop drawings of the school building to create exciting visual images of their own. In Year 9, students thoughtfully discuss abstract imagery, before expressing concepts and emotions, such as fear and loneliness, in striking visual terms.
116. By the end of Key Stage 4, personal study skills are exceptionally well developed. Coursework shows that all students are able to use a wide range of media to communicate their ideas in visual terms. Throughout individual research, students explore connections with the work of well-known artists and provide fruitful material for very individual interpretations, as for the theme 'figures and faces' developed by Year 10 students. Projects are well documented, with annotated sketches, and self-evaluation is used well to advance ideas, as demonstrated in the high quality of work produced by Year 11 students following a visit to St Ives. Finished pieces, often large-scale combinations of both two-dimensional painting and three-dimensional construction, are lively, colourful works of art, rich in expression and meaning. Information and communications technology is used effectively for both design work and in written evaluations.
117. Coursework studies for A levels in art and photography explore visual and perceptual concepts with exceptional depth and diversity. The carefully considered photomontages of local land and seascapes, in the style of Hockney, and the card and wood sculptures, derived from the collage cubism of Braque and Picasso, are monumental in size and conception. They are inspirational.
118. Excellent attitudes to the subject promote independent learning and assist in raising attainment. Students in all years work extremely hard throughout lessons, and show obvious enjoyment in creativity. Behaviour is very good; resources are used very carefully and respect is shown for others' views and work. Students present their work well and take great pride in their achievements. The quantity and quality of displayed art work is outstandingly high. These major strengths of the department's work remain as reported at the time of the last inspection; however, many improvements are in evidence. Accommodation and resourcing show major improvement. Schemes of work have been developed to cover more efficiently the required programmes of study and examination requirements. These now encompass social, historical and cultural aspects and changes in approach initiated by advances in technology. However, several aspects of assessment need further attention. These include the use of assessment data to inform future planning and to raise attainment, the quality of record keeping, and the use of National Curriculum descriptors to assist students to improve their work.

119. The quality of teaching is predominantly very good, and never less than good, across all stages and in all aspects of the subject. Several excellent lessons were seen. Tertiary teaching is of a high standard, and prepares many students for higher education, art college and subject-related professions. Teachers have a wide range of experience to draw on, they know their subject well, and plan and prepare thoroughly. Their expectations of students are high from the outset, and the carefully sequenced projects provide excellent progression and continuity. Art appreciation is extremely well integrated with practical work, and art history is taught in chronological order, starting with cave painting in Year 7, and continuing to contemporary art by the end of Key Stage 4. Varied strategies are used in lessons to promote effective learning, including a good balance of discussion and evaluation, timed activities, group work and target setting. Challenges and demands are considerable, yet projects are sufficiently open-ended to be achievable by the lower attaining students, and also allow unlimited extension work for others. Safe and efficient procedures for handling materials are well established and a lively and purposeful working atmosphere pervades all lessons. Many good features aid learning. The environment is simulating, displays set high standards and relationships are excellent. Homework is directly related to the current project and helpfully and informatively marked.
120. The department is well led and managed, team work is strong. Direction for the subject is clear, within an ethos of striving for excellence. A rich visual education is offered, high standards are set and all students are encouraged to succeed and develop strong community awareness.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. Overall standards are high in design and technology, and higher at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. They are particularly high in the tertiary sector where they represent very good achievement by students.
122. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average and among the highest in the college. Results in catering, food technology, resistant materials and textiles were high. Results at A level were above average, overall, with 50 per cent of the students achieving the highest grade, A. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained in the tertiary sector, and standards have improved at GCSE. High quality products are produced for examination coursework.
123. In lessons and work seen at the end of Key Stage 3, standards were in line with the national expectation and sometimes higher than this. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were below the national expectation, with girls achieving better than boys. The difference between formal assessments and standards in lessons is due to variation in the use of Key Stage 3 assessments. The head of department is strengthening arrangements to improve the consistency with which assessments are made. In lessons and work seen at the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above national expectations and is, at times, very high, particularly in Year 11. Tertiary students in both A levels and tertiary courses attain high or very high levels. The presentation of their work and attention to detail in their design are very good. Students give good consideration to the efficiency and fitness-for-purpose of their designs for A level projects, which include both metal and wood, for example, a study table with a top sliding mechanism. In a lesson on the childhood studies course students showed good knowledge of shaken baby syndrome, and identified suitable strategies for coping with the stress of managing very young children.
124. The best work, particularly at Key Stage 4, is of excellent quality in all material areas including food, textiles and various resistant materials, also in graphic products, systems and control and electronics. Some of the craft-work is of a very high standard, with careful attention to accuracy, finish and aesthetic considerations. Examination design course work is excellent, demonstrating thorough research, realistic designing and good application of knowledge and skills. In technology, on the full GCSE course, students work to a high degree of precision in both metal and wood. Standards are also high on the short course: some very good bird-tables are being constructed by Year 11. Students' design folios on the textile course are very good, showing good planning, accurate use of sewing machines and artistic flair. Students'

awareness of design is reinforced through the department's well organised visits to industrial and commercial organisations which allow students to relate their assignments to industrial practice. Year 10 students on the food technology course design attractive business cards and promotional materials, making effective use of information and communications technology. A wide range of individual, creative designs is produced by older students. Very effective project management is evident at all stages. Whilst generally students in Key Stages 3 and 4 demonstrate much capability in researching, developing ideas, modelling, manufacturing and evaluating their work, there are aspects of work at Key Stage 3 which need improvement. These include the understanding of the design process and its application to the original specification, and the selection and use of materials and tools. Whilst currently, students have few opportunities to experience and use computer control technology, the recent purchases and installation of appropriate equipment mean that this shortcoming is being addressed. Students are using computer-aided design to generate drawings, as in a Year 10 class where, within a single lesson, students produced pictures and drawings in perspective, and also started to make use of the Internet to further their technological knowledge. However, students' experience with pneumatics and use of information and communications technology is an area for development.

125. Overall, the quality of learning is good and students with special educational needs make good progress at all levels. Students understand the tasks presented and work competently to given instructions. On the whole, they can rapidly identify practical ways to complete the task. Many students are confident in their ability to select materials, tools and equipment, and in communicating their ideas clearly. Their design and technology experience and learning are often enhanced through activities and products which they disassemble and evaluate. Some younger students find it hard to organise their work efficiently.
126. Students have very positive attitudes towards design and technology. They enjoy their work, persevere and take much pride in it. The working atmosphere is often good with a buzz as students share their learning. They understand the need to operate in a correct and safe manner and their sense of commitment is a pleasure to observe both when they work independently and as a team. At times, there is irrelevant chatting in some Key Stage 3 classes.
127. The quality of teaching is almost invariably good and is often of a very high standard, particularly with tertiary classes. Teachers are very well qualified, very enthusiastic, emphasise good quality products and set timed targets for the completion of work. Questioning is used well, to challenge students and generate ideas, for example about the fixing of mirrors, with Year 9 students, and food packaging, with Year 7 students. Lessons are well planned and organised and appropriately linked to schemes of work; resource provision and organisation are often very good. Design and practical skills are being safely and carefully taught in all areas. In most lessons learning is driven strongly, at a good pace, by the teacher. Expectations are high and students are encouraged to evaluate and present their work to others, as in a Year 10 food technology class, where students investigated the use of convenience foods, and in a Year 11 graphical products class, where students justified an optimum design solution, through modelling. A variety of tasks involves students in their learning and often there is no time to be distracted. At times, standards dip a little, particularly during Key Stage 3 practical work. Homework is regularly set. The marking and assessment of work, although very good in some classes, requires attention by some teachers of Key Stage 3 classes.
128. This is a very strong department and is very well managed by a very competent design and technology specialist. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Whilst the recent building work has held back the department in some ways, the conscientious and very hard working team of well qualified teachers, has adopted a systematic approach in order to overcome the difficulties. They have analysed very well development priorities, including well established links with the primary schools and the production of support material for students. Teachers give freely of their time to help work on their projects. Curriculum organisation and planning within each material area are real strengths. The assessment arrangements are good, and helpfully involve students. The arrangements for tertiary students to work alongside teachers in the workrooms to help develop their management skills, is a strong feature. The technicians provide very effective and efficient service. Excellent displays of students' work in each of the material areas and in the college corridors interest others and raise expectations. The accommodation and resource provision are now excellent.

DRAMA

129. Standards in drama are above average at the end of Key Stage 3 and well above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Students achieve well. At the end of the tertiary sector standards are a little below course expectations, but they represent satisfactory achievement for the students on the course.
130. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving the upper grades (A*-C) in the 1999 GCSE examinations in drama was very high compared with the national average. Results have risen steadily since 1997. Students do better in drama than in most of the other subjects they take. Results at A level in theatre studies are below average, but students usually achieve a grade. In 1999, students' grades, while modest, were similar to those they gained in their other subjects. A student who entered college with a statement of special educational need obtained an A level pass, which was a creditable achievement.
131. Students enter the college with limited experience of formal drama teaching and with broadly average attainment. Students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, make good progress. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Students work very well together, use space sensibly and show good body control. They become totally absorbed in a task, as in a Year 9 lesson where students were given a line from the sleepwalking scene in *Macbeth* to work with. Written assignments are good. Students make lively diary entries of each lesson's activities. They evaluate dramatic technique when considering the role of the witches in *Macbeth*. They show keen awareness of the contribution of lighting, costume and make-up to the whole performance. Work is neatly presented and, in the main, accurately expressed. However, lower attaining students find the written work more difficult than practical activities.
132. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above average. When preparing GCSE performance pieces, students show impressive creativity, developing ideas fully and organising rehearsal time well. They exercise exceptional self-control and have an instinctive awareness of what others are doing as, for example, in the walking characterisation exercise. Written work is carefully presented and well-informed. Comments on their own and others' performance, and reviews of theatre visits, reflect the enthusiasm students feel for drama. Lower attaining students sometimes struggle to sustain an argument. All students show a firm appreciation of stagecraft in their writing.
133. At the end of the tertiary sector, attainment in theatre studies is below average. Students talk animatedly about their practical tasks and read a script with lively expression, but find the theory work very challenging. Higher attaining students discuss set design for a scene from Rattigan's *Separate Tables* with flair. Middle and lower attainers do not always develop their ideas sufficiently in discussion or in writing; their comments do not have enough evidence to support them. Higher attaining students write well and show a good grasp of themes in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.
134. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and this is a strength of the department. In over three-quarters of lessons teaching is very good, or better; it is excellent in a quarter. It is very seldom less than good. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is excellent. The very high quality of teaching leads to very good learning by students, very good attitudes to work and exemplary behaviour. Teachers have excellent knowledge of dramatic techniques, which enables them to plan stimulating activities for students. Teachers have very high expectations of students' capabilities – this encourages students to strive constantly to improve standards and increase their pace of learning. Relationships in class are very good. Lessons are expertly delivered with very effective use of group work. Students are courteous, thoughtful and reliable. In a Year 9 lesson during an exercise in which students were blindfolded, students had implicit trust in one another. This led to very good knowledge and understanding of drama. Teachers' emphasis on sharing experiences, working as a team and listening to others' views have a very positive impact on students' intellectual, physical and creative efforts – for example, when they are planning a performance or discussing and sketching out a set design. Students with special educational needs work with mainstream students and those who have a particular aptitude for drama. A strong feature of practical work is the very good support students give to one another. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, a student with a statement of special

educational need achieved well because of the help he received from the teacher and fellow students in preparing a scene for GCSE assessment. In a Year 8 lesson, pairs worked very well in a reading task with the more capable readers helping lower attainers. This led to very good acquisition of drama and literacy skills. Teachers use in-class evaluation well to assess performance and lead students to a self-awareness. Their subtle blend of discussion, performance and evaluation work helps students to concentrate hard and produce work of very good quantity and quality. Just occasionally, teacher input begins to dominate the lesson and younger students become restless. Teachers mark written work carefully and tell students clearly what they must do to improve. Teachers' enthusiasm for drama is infectious – this ensures students' full engagement with their work.

135. The drama curriculum is well planned. There are particularly good links with English, through work on Shakespearean texts, and this benefits learning within both subject areas. Drama makes an especially valuable contribution to students' speaking and listening work. While the GCSE syllabus serves students well, the A level theatre studies syllabus, with its emphasis on theory, is proving difficult for some students. The head of department is considering an alternative syllabus which matches students' needs more closely. Students' experience of drama is enriched by extra-curricular activities, such as school productions, theatre workshops and theatre visits. The local theatre company appreciates the skilful contribution made to their productions from the college students. Provision for students at different levels of achievement is good. Schemes of work allow students with special educational needs to achieve well, and this raises their self-esteem. A few students with statements have gained high grades. Those who are gifted and talented are challenged in both performing and writing tasks. Assessments are well recorded and help teachers to form groups within classes. This is having a very positive impact on attainment, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4. Students use information and communication technology well to enhance the appearance of coursework. The department development plan shows commitment to further use of technology.
136. The department is well led and managed; there is a clear educational direction for the subject. Standards have improved since the last inspection, in Key Stage 4 particularly. All of the teachers are committed to raising attainment, and their lessons fully support the school's ethos for hard work and consideration for others. The department is well resourced. Accommodation is not ideal – the hall, for example, is used as a social area at break-time – but teachers make excellent use of what they have and ensure standards remain high. There are plans to improve accommodation in the near future.

GEOGRAPHY

137. Overall, standards and achievements in geography are satisfactory. Results at GCSE in geography are in line with the national average. The percentage of the higher grades, (A*/A) has steadily improved over the last three years and is just above average. Students generally achieve as well in geography as in their other subjects. Results at A level are in line with the national average.
138. Teacher assessments of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 have fluctuated over the last three years but, from lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 3. Students' good levels of literacy allow them to find information from a variety of sources. They make effective use of information and communications technology. Year 7 students, for example, find and apply information about the effects of flooding in Bangladesh. Enquiry skills are well developed by local fieldwork. Students' understanding of ideas is good. High attaining students in Year 8 effectively apply criteria to select the best site for a factory. Lower attaining students gain some understanding of the conflicts that arise as they explore the effects of hedge clearance on the environment. High attaining students in Year 9 compare the effect of earthquakes in developing and developed countries. They appreciate that geographical patterns differ, according to circumstance and location.
139. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 matches that expected nationally. Students' understanding of processes, such as urbanisation, is enhanced by well-designed fieldwork. They use a satisfactory range of graphical skills to present data and higher attaining students demonstrate good levels of analysis and evaluation. Lower attaining students use information such as wages, car ownership and literacy rates to note differences in living standards between

rich and poor countries. Higher attaining students write detailed accounts of the factors affecting birth and death-rates to compare rates of population growth. In the tertiary sector, students' attainment is appropriate for A level. Students acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of issues such as sustainable development, and can justify and evaluate decisions affecting the environment. Their understanding of the physical environment is enhanced by practical work, for example investigations into the effects of variations in light intensity on vegetation. They use statistical techniques effectively to compare data.

140. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Key Stages 3 and 4 it is good or very good in around half of the lessons, and satisfactory in most of the rest. Teaching in the tertiary sector is always good or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge so that explanations are clear and coursework is effectively guided by well-produced booklets. The management of students is consistently good; discipline is firm and fair so that students know what is expected of them and time is not wasted on dealing with poor behaviour. Lessons are usually well planned so that students' learning builds upon their previous knowledge. Teachers generally use a variety of methods to involve students in activities to hold their interest. Group work and decision-making exercises are well used to provide challenge, especially in tertiary lessons when students evaluate their decisions and compare them with government policy. Generally, a good range of resources is used, including information and communications technology. The library is well used, to encourage independent research. Learning support assistants effectively support students with special educational needs. Very occasionally, weaknesses occur when the work is not sufficiently broken down into manageable steps so that students' understanding of ideas remains insecure. Although arrangements for grouping students according to attainment generally enable teachers to adapt work to meet students' needs, more highly attaining students in some mixed ability classes at Key Stage 4 are not challenged enough. Homework is regularly set and marked and contributes well to students' learning. Some teachers provide detailed and helpful written comments to show students how to improve their work; others are encouraging but not consistently helpful. Teachers make little reference to geography in targets set.
141. All students acquire knowledge and skills at a satisfactory rate and handle increasingly complex ideas as they progress through the college. They achieve well when knowledge, understanding and skills are effectively promoted. For example, high attaining students in Year 10 accurately interpret graphs to explain changes in population growth over time. They use indicators of development to explain differences in population growth between developed and developing countries. Students' positive attitudes to the subject contribute to their generally good rates of learning. When students are actively involved in tasks, they work hard and sustain their efforts throughout the lesson. They demonstrate interest in what they are doing and ask questions. They listen well to their teachers and work well in groups. Relationships in lessons are very good and students co-operate with their teachers and each other so that lessons run smoothly and time is well used for learning. However, when work relies too heavily on textbooks or worksheets, and written tasks go on too long, lapses in concentration and irrelevant chatter slow the pace of work. Students with special educational needs learn effectively in smaller groups, with very effective additional support and appropriate emphasis on basic skills. In Key Stage 4, the department offers low attaining students the alternative Certificate of Achievement in geography; students in 1999 achieved well, gaining distinctions and merits. The department's literacy policy provides useful guidance about how to promote basic skills. Key words are displayed in all rooms, although teachers make little use of them. Some good pieces of extended writing are encouraged. However, a few teachers rely too heavily on copied notes which limits students' understanding. Tertiary students learn effectively, acquiring and using an extensive subject vocabulary. Fieldwork and practical work provide challenge and opportunities to work independently.
142. The department is well led and managed. The department has responded positively to the previous report and has developed a programme of fieldwork at Key Stage 3 which has contributed effectively to students' learning. Progress has been made in matching work to the range of students' needs, with the production of extension and support materials. Older students' understanding of geography is enhanced through fieldwork, both locally and abroad. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has improved and satisfactory achievement at GCSE and A level has been maintained. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. However, there is still a need to challenge more highly attaining students in mixed ability classes at Key Stage 4. A well-planned programme of information and communications technology is starting to be delivered. Procedures for assessing students' achievement in the

National Curriculum are in place but assessments need to be more closely related to the National Curriculum to allow more secure judgements to be made about levels of attainment and to set subject-specific targets.

HISTORY

143. Standards in history are above average overall, and represent good achievement by students. These generally good levels of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection. GCSE results are above the national average. In 1999, the proportion of the highest grades (A*/A) was well above average. Results have been improving over the last three years, and in the last two years, every student has obtained a grade. Results at A level are above average.
144. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly average, and girls achieve better than boys. In work seen during the inspection, students' achievement is above expectations in lessons in Year 9; teachers' estimates were cautious. Students understand how dates and periods are used to pinpoint and describe the past. Their understanding of words, such as democracy, fascism and communism, is good and they can make comparisons between ideologies and their effect in the countries where they flourished. Additionally, students consider and use evidence from historical sources, appreciating that it may not always be reliable or unbiased. They can develop their ideas at some length, making effective use of the wide vocabulary they have acquired across the key stage.
145. In lessons at the end of Year 11, standards are above average, in line with GCSE results. Students build up an accurate depth of subject knowledge, which most can apply well. In examining historical sources, they consider the evidence and most can link it to their own knowledge and draw conclusions - for example, that the use of leeches in early nineteenth century medicine meant that little progress had been made. All students offer some evidence to support their arguments, though not always in enough detail. Students with special educational needs acquire historical skills in Key Stage 3 and obtain GCSE grades in Key Stage 4. Gifted students ask more searching questions throughout.
146. By the end of Year 13, students achieve highly in lessons. Their depth of knowledge provides a sound basis on which they can develop their understanding of historical method. Students argue their opinions vigorously and justify them, gradually building up an overview of the topic, as they did whilst considering the reasons for Stalin's policies. They produce well-structured and well-referenced essays.
147. Teaching is generally good. In about three-quarters of the lessons it is good or very good, and in the remainder it is satisfactory. Students learn well. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is used to promote learning effectively in several ways. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and awaken student interest and involvement. Their questioning directs students to significant points and often helps them both to revise and to apply facts and information. Lessons are well planned, carefully timed and sometimes combine activities and resources such as role-play and information technology, to good effect as in extending Year 9 students' understanding of 'isms' in the mid-twentieth century. Teachers understand the needs of their students very well and they modify their presentation, use a wide range of materials, and offer extra support, either themselves or through a learning support assistant, when this is necessary. In most lessons, students are well challenged by activities or pace, and this helps to maintain their interest. However, the proportion of good and very good teaching is higher at Key Stage 4 and in the tertiary sector than at Key Stage 3. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved significantly. All teaching is now satisfactory or better, expectations are higher and a good pace is maintained in lessons.
148. A significant factor in students' learning is the quality of relationships. Teachers' work hard to create an atmosphere of respect and trust in class, and students respond with co-operation and hard work. This enables independent learning skills to grow well as students are trusted to use facilities and resources with minimal supervision.
149. The head of department provides clear educational leadership; the teachers are highly committed and work well together. The schemes of work are thorough, and include effective use of information and communications technology, and fieldwork. In all lessons, but particularly at Key Stage 3, vocabulary and sentence construction are emphasised effectively.

A wide range of resources is available to teachers and they are frequently used, including the library and computer rooms. Regular assessment of students' work is good and individual student information is well used at Key Stage 4 and in the tertiary sector to agree targets. Procedures for assessment at Key Stage 3 are being revised and monitored, but at this stage students have limited understanding of their own attainment, relative to the National Curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

150. Students choose between French, German and Spanish in Year 7. Students have the opportunity to study a second language in Year 9, and they can continue to study two languages in Key Stage 4 and in the tertiary phase, if they wish.
151. Standards in modern foreign languages are average up to the end of Key Stage 4 and, overall, represent satisfactory achievement by students. Standards and achievement in the tertiary sector are good.
152. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Although reported teacher assessments for 1999 show standards to be below national expectations, the standard seen in lessons and in the analysis of work is better, but not as high as it could be. Students of all abilities understand simple spoken and written language. They communicate well in structured oral situations, with good pronunciation and intonation, but their writing in the foreign language is comparatively under-developed because of limited opportunities. The pace of work over the key stage is undemanding for many of the more able students, although students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lower attaining groups.
153. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average, but there is evidence of considerable improvement amongst students currently in Year 11. GCSE results at the higher grades (A*-C) in 1999 were well above the national average in French, both overall and for boys and girls separately. In German, results were slightly below the national average, though boys' results were above the national average for boys, and they did better than girls. In Spanish, results were well below the national average, for both boys and girls, but boys' results were low. Overall, results at GCSE are a little below those reported at the last inspection. However, results in 1999 for individual students were satisfactory: almost every student gained a GCSE grade within the range A*-G, or a Certificate of Achievement, so that students in lower attaining groups, including those with special educational needs, did as well as expected. The pace of work continues to be moderate in the early stages of Key Stage 4, but there is significant acceleration with the emphasis on preparation for external examinations. Students experience and understand much more challenging listening and reading comprehension tasks. They benefit from more regular opportunities to extend the range of their oral work, for example in conversation with foreign language assistants, and in both speaking and writing they demonstrate knowledge of a range of tenses and vocabulary, and good awareness of grammatical rules. Estimates for GCSE examinations in 2000 are consistent with standards improving in German and Spanish, and high standards are being maintained in French.
154. Results at A level in 1999 were average overall, with some good results at the higher A-B grades. Results in French and German were better than those in Spanish. Standards in work seen during the inspection were good, especially in Year 12, and reflect the higher level of attainment of students embarking on A level courses. Students work hard. They respond well to a rich range of learning experiences, including regular individual sessions with foreign language assistants, using the Internet to access information, and imaginative tasks set by teachers, several of whom are themselves native speakers of French and German. They discuss and write about a range of moral and social issues, for example racism, ecology and the problems of being a teenager. In general, their work is accurate and the breadth of their vocabulary enables them to understand spoken and written language of great complexity. However, it is a matter of concern that students with similar results at GCSE achieve such a range of outcomes at A level, suggesting some underachievement at this stage of learning.
155. Attitudes to learning modern foreign languages are unusually positive. Students like the subject and appreciate its relevance. They take care over their work and its presentation; they collaborate well with each other and recognise good performance and good effort from

classmates and, especially in the tertiary phase, are supportive of each other and appreciative of the work of their teachers. Behaviour is nearly always excellent, as students sustain concentration well for the full lesson duration (sixty minutes). In isolated lessons there is a lack of attention and an element of low level chatter which can adversely affect the progress of other students. Participation is good in extra-curricular activities, such as exchanges abroad and the Taste of Languages evening, and students make good use of opportunities for extra oral practice in Year 11.

156. Teaching and learning are good overall and particularly effective in Year 11 and the tertiary sector. There is a little unsatisfactory teaching, largely to middle-attaining groups, and this is due to insufficient insistence on students paying attention or low expectations, with too much English used to conduct the lesson. In these cases students' pronunciation and intonation are discernibly weaker. However, there are many good features which have positive impact on students' learning. In most lessons, teachers make good use of the foreign language and expect students to use it as the normal means of communication. They enjoy good relationships with students, so that there is a pastoral feel about many lessons. They plan well for individual lessons and for a sequence of lessons, so that students learn through being involved in a range of activities. They make particularly effective use of games to promote learning across the full age range, including the tertiary sector, so that the element of enjoyment is sustained. Pace is usually brisk as teachers make good use of the time available. In a Year 10 German lesson on personal description, students participated in a range of oral games prompted by good use of an overhead projector, they took part in role plays, did a listening comprehension based on a tape recording and finished with a little written work. This level of planning and organisation is typical of the good practice which permeates the teaching. Teachers make very effective use of computers to assist learning. The department of ten teachers has undertaken collective training to ensure regular and consistent provision of this facet of teaching and learning. Marking of work is up-to-date and students benefit from useful advice made in comments on their written work. Homework is set regularly and complements classwork well. For example, a Year 8 French class made life-like property advertisement sheets at home, and these were used in the following lesson as the basis for role play. A weaker aspect of teaching concerns challenge. In most lessons the whole class does the same work, and this does not stretch the more able within the group. Similarly, the challenge of the work in Key Stage 3 is often undemanding for such students, and they make slower progress through National Curriculum levels than they could.
157. The department is well and energetically led. Teamwork is very good, and has a positive impact on students' learning. The work of the department is monitored through the college appraisal system and through regular meetings, as well as at a more informal level. Responsibilities are shared by the heads of individual languages. The subject development plan indicates a good awareness of the department's strengths and priorities for improvement. Staff, including foreign language assistants for all three languages, are well deployed to make the most effective use of their individual strengths. The range and quality of resources, including accommodation, are impressive, and help to create an environment to which students come willingly to work. Display of students' work is very good in each classroom, with especially good examples of computer-assisted learning.
158. Standards of attainment are not as high as those reported at the time of the last inspection, although there is strong evidence of current improvement. Improvement in the use of computers, both by staff and students, has been substantial. Students benefit from more frequent opportunities to produce spoken language in lessons. Assessment procedures have improved, and students in Key Stage 4 and the tertiary sector know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. This level of information needs to be extended into Key Stage 3. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. To improve further the department should strive to improve schemes of work to integrate more challenging written tasks and opportunities for personal reading, and to match work more closely to the abilities of individual students, especially in Key Stage 3, so that the learning of more able students is accelerated. Expectations of middle and lower sets could be higher, with particular emphasis on reducing the use of English by teachers. The performance of students in the tertiary phase needs to be evaluated more sharply to ensure a more comparable rate of progress by all students.

MUSIC

159. Overall, standards in music are high, representing good achievement by students. Students' attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3, based on teacher assessments, is above the national expectation. GCSE results are above the national average. While only one candidate entered music at A/S level in 1999, a good grade was achieved. However, numbers taking A level are increasing: 13 are due to sit the examination in 2000. Standards are much higher than at the time of the last inspection.
160. Standards in lessons at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectations. The attainment of nearly all students matches national expectations and the more musically able students exceed them; there is no low attainment. Students in Year 7 have explored the contrasting sounds of percussion instruments and developed a library of sound resources for use in subsequent work. They have revised the rhythmic notation skills learnt in Key Stage 2 and used them to read short rhythms printed on card at sight. Students in Year 8 have developed their own notation systems and created graphic scores. They have also learnt to analyse the form of some classically structured pieces of music. They recognise the difference between "binary", "ternary" and "rondo" and composed pieces in AB form. Students in Year 9 have learnt the basic skills required to access music software on the computer and, using percussion instruments, have explored more complex rhythms. Their knowledge of the elements of music and composition skills are above expectations. However, the use of musical language at Key Stage 3 is limited.
161. Standards in lessons and work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average, in line with GCSE results. Students in Year 10 have good listening skills. They make effective use of musical vocabulary in appraising well known pieces of music and commenting on the differences they note between performance and the original score. Students in Year 11 are preparing for the forthcoming examinations. Their study skills are good and many have good instrumental skills, fostered through tuition and participation in college groups and activities.
162. Overall, standards in the tertiary sector are above expectations for A level. The more able performers or composers exceed expectations and the rest achieve in line with expectations. Year 12 students have good listening skills. They recognise musical structure, scales and notation in pieces performed by other students in lessons, or written in scores. Year 13 students achieve highly in lessons. For example, they appreciate at an advanced level the characteristics of musical periods, including the Baroque and Classical.
163. Learning in Key Stage 3 is very good, owing to the eagerness of the students to participate in lessons, and the commitment of the teachers to ensure that they have worthwhile musical experiences. For example, students in Year 7 take the rhythms they have been clapping and choose suitable percussion instruments to play them. They then play the rhythm in groups and extend the given rhythm into a longer piece, which they perform to the remainder of the class. The listeners then make sensitive, evaluative comments. Students in Year 8 learn to play a simple minuet in groups using notation skills they learnt at the end of Year 7 to read the music. The piece includes a melody, a counter-melody, and a bass line, sometimes played by a more able student who is familiar with bass clef notation. Students in Year 9 use more complicated rhythms in building up a composition composed by the entire class, and played on an unusual collection of percussion "instruments". Teachers' planning enables students with special educational needs to join in practical activities and keep up with the rest of the class. Other students are often helpful, and they learn well.
164. Learning in Key Stage 4 is also very good. Performance and understanding of the theory of music are effectively linked. Students in Year 10 experience playing in a chamber ensemble with parts arranged to suit all abilities. Some of the more musically able play solos, accompanied by the remainder of the ensemble. Students in Year 11 were observed working on their composition portfolios, some of them competently using computers to achieve pieces of a good standard. In a recent millennium competition, a group of students were placed sufficiently highly to be asked to perform at the Colston Hall in Bristol. A different composition was chosen by a college dance group and used for a series of concerts outside the college.
165. Study skills are well developed in the tertiary sector and students take increased responsibility for their own progress. Students in Year 12 perform different pieces regularly to the remainder of the class, and become accustomed to playing in front of an audience - one of the requirements of the A level examination. They are competently tackling aural exercises at A

level standard. Students in Year 13 are reaching the end of their A level course and are approaching the twentieth century in their study of musical extracts. They effectively combine their understanding of performance and musical theory in exploring in detail the difference between periods in musical history.

166. Attitudes and behaviour are very good, in some instances excellent. All students are interested in participating in musical activities both in lessons and through extra-curricular opportunities. Students participate willingly and reliably. They listen attentively to the teacher and respond politely when they are spoken to, or their name is called in registration. Relationships are good. Sometimes students work in groups in a corridor outside the classroom, often without the direct supervision of the teacher. Here they apply themselves wholeheartedly to the task, showing real concern for the finished composition, and maintaining their concentration. They listen to each other, negotiate, and determine the final outcome. Students will, when requested, set up and pack away instruments, treating them with care, and in a responsible manner.
167. The teaching of music is mostly good, with some excellent aspects in the tertiary sector. Teachers' knowledge and understanding, both of the subject and the way in which students learn, are used very effectively. For instance, they sum up students' evaluation of their compositions and performances, and add comments of their own to effectively guide further progress. They select apt examples of listening material and assist in the students' learning, by asking well focused questions which help the students to discover the answers for themselves. In composition work in which solos are allocated, teachers encourage the soloists to work out their own parts, thus giving opportunities for students to stretch their imagination and improve their playing skills. Students are encouraged to contribute to the different instrumental sections of class compositions, and thus they learn new skills and appreciate better instrumental tone and colour. Lessons are well planned and varied. Good use is made of time, and resources are planned and well prepared in advance. Teachers have high expectations and support effectively the work of groups and individuals, offering praise, encouragement and advice. The teachers are good role models of musicians.
168. The teachers have built up an excellent relationship with the students which encourages them to be more forthcoming in discussion and composing and thus generally make progress. Management of the students is quiet and firm. Informal assessment takes place during most lessons, either as the teacher is circulating during group work, or while the students are performing their pieces. More formal assessment takes place at specified times in the term and targets for improvement are discussed, but not written down. Assessments are linked to the National Curriculum thus ensuring that both the students and parents are acquainted with them well before the end of Key Stage 3. Little homework is set in Key Stage 3.
169. Staffing is excellent. In addition to teaching by college staff, extensive instrumental tuition is provided by 14 instrumental teachers, mostly from Devon Youth Music who teach 219 students (over one tenth of the college). Instrumental teachers support the numerous concerts which the department promotes and some accompany the college staff and students on trips abroad. In the summer of 1999, a party of 72 students went to Vienna, giving several concerts there, including one at Esterhazy castle, where Haydn spent a great deal of his working life.
170. Accommodation is of good quality, and recently increased, but the volume of music teaching is such that at times it is barely adequate. There are no storage facilities in the new classroom and no facilities for class group work, although there are plans drawn up to convert a changing room.
171. Since the last inspection there has been a complete change of full time staff in the department, with one new teacher arriving in September 1997, and the new head of department arriving in January 1998. The new head of department has continued to develop the range of experiences offered to the students started by his predecessor, particularly in the areas of composing and performing. Regular concerts take place in and outside the college, and programmes usually include compositions by students. The department is very well led. It is a vibrant, vital part of the college life, with students queuing to use the music rooms at break and lunch times. Demand for the various groups to perform in the community is constant, and in these activities the students are supported by all the teaching staff, who give up their non-teaching time for the benefit and enrichment of the students. The Music Centre, held weekly, provides music enhancements for primary pupils. As a result of instrumental examinations,

college students are invited to play at the concerts promoted for those candidates achieving the highest marks. The musical life of the college was further enriched by a composer in residence last year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

172. Standards and achievement in physical education are high, particularly in the tertiary sector. Results for sports studies at GCSE are consistently above the national average for similar schools, and a little better than results of other subjects in the college. All students achieve a graded result, and many do better in sports studies than in their other subjects. In 1999, GCSE results in dance were well above the national average, and better than in 1998, when they were broadly average. Results at A level are in line with the national average, overall, and all students achieve a pass. Many individuals and teams achieve highly, some at national and regional levels, for example in rugby, tennis and cross-country events. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection, with substantial improvement in facilities.
173. Standards in lessons and work seen towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectations. A significant minority of students is achieving well beyond this. Teachers provide opportunities in a high proportion of lessons for the development of independent learning. Most students in games show high skill levels and they understand rules and basic match tactics. In dance and gymnastics they show good balance and rhythm. Lower attaining students show satisfactory individual skills, but are not as effective in the pressure of game situations. High attaining students in games have instant control and can consistently outmanoeuvre opponents by effective use of their skills and tactics. In gymnastics and dance, students' work is characterised by creativity and precision. Standards towards the end of Key Stage 4 in the core physical education lessons are above nationally expected levels. Students understand the factors that constitute a healthy lifestyle, can analyse performance and plan ways to improve it. High attaining students in Year 11 playing badminton use space and tactics well to outmanoeuvre opponents. Lower attaining students in tennis experience difficulties because of poor hand-eye co-ordination. Year 11 GCSE students are on target to achieve slightly beyond national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. They have good practical skills, are confident and well-informed in discussion work, and accurately analyse performance. Their written work is well-presented, but lacks the data analysis and presentation afforded by information and communications technology.
174. Standards achieved by tertiary students are well beyond nationally expected levels and a fair proportion are achieving at an exceptional level. Students have an excellent knowledge of both the physiological and psychological aspects of performance. Their application of individual skills, team skills and tactics to match situations, is often outstanding. Students working towards A level and vocational qualifications are on target to achieve well beyond national averages. The often excellent level of specialist teaching and use of outstanding facilities contribute significantly to students' achievement. Boys and girls achieve equally well throughout the college.
175. Teaching is very good throughout the college with some excellent features, particularly in the tertiary sector. Overall, learning across the attainment range is good, and very good in Years 9, 11, 12 and 13. The progress of high attaining students is accelerated through outstanding extension programmes. Excellent liaison with partner primary schools is considerably helping continuity and progression at the start of Key Stage 3. As students move through the college they refine techniques and develop a better understanding of tactics, rules and safety. Teachers manage students extremely well and maintain very good relationships with their classes. Their expectations are very high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. Opportunities for independent learning are provided in a high proportion of lessons. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group work and confidently try new skills. Systematic progress is aided by well-planned and challenging teaching. In a Year 9 dance lesson, the teacher created a stimulating learning environment through the use of appropriate music, videos of performance and enthusiasm. Students made effective use of opportunities to plan and judge performance: they progressed beyond expectations. Students with special educational needs learn well, due to teaching being planned to suit their individual requirements and very good support. Rules and instructions are simplified, equipment adapted and groupings carefully set.

176. In Key Stage 4, students consolidate prior learning and develop their knowledge, including about teamwork and tactics. Many students undertake the Junior Sports' Leader's Award, on which they make good gains in learning about planning and evaluation, safety awareness and communication skills. Tertiary students benefit greatly from the enhancements the college provides as a Sports College: specialist teaching, facilities and a range of examination courses. Their skill in games, in analysing performance and in communicating are developing to a high level. The Community Sports' Leader's Award is providing opportunities for students to develop a whole range of teaching and support skills. Students preparing for qualifications in the tertiary sector improve their ability to research information, summarise findings and analyse performance. Good use is made of information and communications technology on the GNVQ course.
177. Curricular planning is excellent. A wide range of opportunities is provided, including courses leading to GCSE, A level, the Junior Sports' Leader's Award, the Community Sports' Leader's Award and the GNVQ at advanced level in sports science. Schemes of work are thorough with good detail. Links with other subjects are excellent. For example, collaboration with art has resulted in a realistic Tor, painted behind the climbing wall. Work on healthy living is linked with topics in food technology, design and technology and science. As students record and evaluate data and results, they improve their skills in English, mathematics and information and communications skills. The college is working in partnership with Exeter University in researching in sports science. University staff regularly visit the college, meet students and use the sports physiology laboratory. The joint project with university staff gives college staff and students greater insight into factors affecting performance and stamina, and enhances the professional standing of the college with reports published in national and international journals.
178. Leadership and management by the director of sport and head of department are outstanding. They are supported by a dedicated team of specialist teachers and a well-qualified sports technician. Comments in the last report were very positive and since then the quality of teaching overall, achievement and facilities have improved even more. Sports College status has brought considerable benefits to the whole college. Short and long term planning is well-detailed. The department is in the forefront of developments to use information and communications technology in physical education. Assessment is thorough. Since the last inspection, both indoor and outdoor facilities have improved greatly; they are outstandingly good and make a major contribution to the sporting success of the college. The college now has an excellent fitness suite, dance studio and climbing wall. Students improve their badminton skills in the well-maintained sports hall, used also by national and regional badminton squads. Students' achievement in games and athletics are well supported by the practice opportunities provided on the biggest all-weather pitch in the south west and the floodlit 8-lane tartan track. The floodlit tennis courts, sponsored by the Lawn Tennis Association, provide excellent year-round facilities for students. The provision for extra-curricular sport is outstanding and students' excellent participation rate is recognised by a Sportsmark Gold Award. Departmental staff give excellent support to primary schools and many young pupils visit for extra-curricular activities and for coaching, by college staff and by professional players, for example from Plymouth Argyle Football Club. College facilities are very well used by local community groups and teams. Many college staff are involved in leading community activities. Individual students and college teams in a wide range of sports achieve outstanding success at county, regional and national levels, for example, in rugby, tennis, cross-country and athletics events.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

179. Standards in business studies at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average and represent good achievement by students. Standards across the business courses provided in the tertiary sector are above average, representing satisfactory achievement by students. These generally good standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
180. Results in GCSE business studies at the higher grades (A*-C) are significantly above the national average, but fewer students achieve at least grade G than nationally. Results at A level in business studies are a little better than is nationally the case. Economics results at A level were below average in 1999. While few students achieved the highest grades in

sociology, all passed A level and, overall, results were average. None of the highest (A) grades were obtained in these three A level subjects in 1999. The attainment of vocational students following GNVQ courses in business at both intermediate and advanced levels is significantly better than is nationally the case. In 1999, 75 percent of the students completed the advanced course, with nearly 60 per cent gaining either merit or distinction grades. On the intermediate course, all 15 students successfully completed their studies, and 14 gained either a merit or distinction. Students on business courses are successfully entered for certificates in computing.

181. Standards in lessons and work seen at the end of Key Stage 4, are above course expectations. Students are consolidating their learning and are developing their knowledge. For example, Year 10 students can design job advertisements, understand the difference between a person specification and a job specification and appreciate that there are many media that might be utilised to ensure that advertisements reach their target audiences. In a Year 11 lesson, many students were able to distinguish between the terms monetary and fiscal policy and were able to identify why the Government raises funds through its fiscal policy and what the money is spent on. In the tertiary sector, attainment is in line with course expectations, with some high attainment, particularly in A level classes. For example, in sociology students were able to offer good explanations of absolute and relative social mobility. In economics, higher attaining students were able to explain absolute and comparative cost advantage and identify salient points, but students did not draw consistently well on their prior learning. Some students have a satisfactory knowledge of basic terms, but struggle to apply their knowledge in an analytical way. In vocational classes, attainment is at least in line with expectations. The very high completion rates, especially at intermediate level, aid attainment, but absence rates amongst advanced business students are high and this detracts from overall attainment. In class, all business students work with interest. Key skills are being enhanced and the students collaborate well. In a Year 13 class, a group of students was making good plans for a charity event they are organising. Their enthusiasm was good and they displayed good awareness about issues such as health and safety.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In nearly all lessons teaching is satisfactory or better, and in a substantial majority it is good or very good. The quality of teaching is aiding the learning and attainment of all students irrespective of their course of study. Many strengths are evident. Staff use open-ended questions well to reinforce prior learning and to set the pace for lessons. In better lessons, expectations are high and staff are prepared to challenge. This was particularly evident in an A level sociology lesson on social mobility and in a Year 11 class where a most thought-provoking video on child labour was shown. The challenges presented in these lessons, allied to the thorough preparation and sensitive presentation conducted by the teachers, all served to enhance learning. Teaching is also making a very good contribution to key skills. Appropriate emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communications technology skills. Occasionally, lessons have weak features which affect students' learning. For example, the pace of lessons is too slow, students are managed less effectively and the material sometimes lacks challenge and relevance. Assessment arrangements for vocational qualifications are good and help students to achieve well. The quality of marking varies across business-related subjects.
183. The department is well managed. It has continued to develop since the last inspection and, though there has been some fluctuation in results during the intervening period, standards overall have been maintained, with results at GCSE and on vocational courses remaining strong. Teamwork is good. The last inspection suggested that industrial links should be strengthened. This has been done for the GNVQ courses, and appropriate use is made of industrial contacts in other subjects. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is cultivated well. Very good use is made of the college's enhanced provision of computers, for example the students can learn by undertaking their own research through the Internet. The overall level of improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.