

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE**

Impington, Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110861

Warden: Mrs Jacqueline E Kearns

Reporting inspector: Dr K C Thomas  
RgI's OIN: 3390

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 March 2002

Inspection number: 188328

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: New Road  
Impington  
Cambridge

Postcode: CB4 9LX

Telephone number: 01223 200400

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Sue Anderson

Date of previous inspection: 13 May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>			<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
3390	Ken Thomas	Registered inspector	Psychology (sixth form)	<p>What sort of college is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The college's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the college led and managed?</p> <p>What should the college do to improve further?</p>
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standard?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the college care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the college work in partnership with parents?</p>
19385	Martin Beale	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19399	Linda Aspland	Team inspector	Art	
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science Chemistry (sixth form)	
18447	Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	Religious education	

11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History History (sixth form) History (IB)	
10417	Kevin Lambert	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form) Biology (IB)	
11548	David lee	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form) Mathematics (IB) Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
13805	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music	
13054	Michael Pennington	Team inspector	French (IB) German (IB)	
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	Physical education	
8717	Tim Roderick	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
27983	Mary Sewell	Team inspector	English (sixth form) Drama (sixth form)	

11300	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography Geography (IB) Special educational needs	
22948	Mary Vallis	Team inspector	Physically disabled unit	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Impington is an 11-18 mixed Cambridgeshire Village College. There are 1348 pupils on roll, of whom 254 are in the sixth form, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. The college is bigger than most other comprehensive schools with a sixth form. It is popular with parents and oversubscribed. The number of pupils has increased by about 16 per cent since the last inspection. The college provides for pupils across the full attainment range, although attainment on entry is above average, overall. A physically disabled unit is based at the college and provides specialist support for 21 pupils. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and with Statements of Special Educational Needs are above average. Most of the Statements are for moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties or physical impairment. About 20 per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a small proportion of white Europeans. Just under 10 per cent of pupils are bilingual. No pupils in the main college are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Many of the bilingual pupils are in the sixth form, which attracts a number of pupils from other countries. The most frequently spoken home languages are German, Turkish, Chinese and Urdu. A very small number of pupils, two only, are refugees. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 6.7 per cent, is below the national average.

The college is situated in a reasonably prosperous area. About 80 per cent of pupils are drawn from five primary schools in the immediate area, the remainder come from up to 15 primary schools that serve estates and other residential areas in North Cambridge. Some of these areas are identified as areas of significant social disadvantage. About 14 per cent of pupils are drawn from these areas.

### **HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS**

Impington Village College is a very good school and improving. Teaching is good throughout the main college and very good in the sixth form, supported by very good leadership and effective management. Overall standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average and in GCSE examinations they are above average. These results represent good achievement among all groups of pupils. The college provides good value for money.

#### **What the college does well**

- Pupils achieve well. National Curriculum test results are well above average and GCSE examination results are above average.
- The very capable senior management team has succeeded in establishing enthusiastic teamwork and a commitment to raising standards further in all areas of the work of the college.
- Teaching is good: teachers are knowledgeable and plan lessons well so pupils learn effectively.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and show interest in the wide range of activities the college provides.
- Very good provision and high expectations in modern foreign languages lead to increasingly high standards and very good achievement.
- Pupils are provided with very good care and support; they respond well to the excellent opportunities for personal development.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They participate fully in all aspects of the college and achieve very well.
- The broad range of courses in Years 10 and 11, together with excellent provision for extra-curricular activities, provides well for pupils' diverse abilities and talents.

#### **What could be improved**

- The senior management team is under strength and as a result there are some inconsistencies in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Planning and provision to meet fully National Curriculum requirements in information and communication technology (ICT), and the requirements for the use of computers in art and music.
- Curriculum planning to ensure that pupils' learning builds on their experiences in design and technology in a more continuous way.
- Provision in religious education to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- The provision of speech therapy by the health authority and some aspects of the accommodation for pupils with physical disabilities

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

## HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made good progress since the last inspection in May 1996. Teaching is better now and National Curriculum test results have improved above those nationally. GCSE results have improved and sixth form results have also improved overall. Good progress has been made on the key issues identified in the last report. The pastoral system has been strengthened to include the monitoring and review of pupils' academic progress. There are more extension activities for gifted and talented pupils. Effective action has been taken to raise the attainment of boys and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has been narrowed. Substantial investment has been made in computers, although there is still a need to increase their use across the curriculum. The college development plan is clearly costed and staff development is now linked closely to curriculum development. Staff are more fully involved in college decision making. The college has implemented a range of evaluative measures, but there remains a need for more consistent monitoring in some departments. Provision for religious education has improved in Years 10 and 11 but not in Years 7 to 9. The college has planned programmes for thought-for-the-day and assemblies but is still unable to provide a daily act of collective worship.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	B	well above average A average B above average C average D below average E well below average
A-levels/AS-levels	D	E	D		

Overall results in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, in English, mathematics and science have risen faster than results nationally over the past four years. In 2001 the results in all three subjects were well above average in comparison with all schools and with schools in similar social circumstances. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 to be at or above national expectations in almost all subjects. Standards in design and technology, ICT and religious education are adversely affected by the rotational arrangement for teaching the subjects. Although girls achieved higher standards than boys in most subjects, the gap between the performance of boys and girls tends to be smaller than the national difference.

After a slight downward trend from 1998 to 2000, GCSE examination results rose in 2001 to be well above average both for pupils gaining five subjects at the higher A\* to C grades and overall. These results were above average relative to those in similar schools and represent good achievement from the end of Year 9. Results were well above average in mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry, and average in English. Results in double award science were below average. When all science results are combined they were above average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Almost all gain GCSE grades in the A\* to G range, with many gaining grades in the higher A\* to C range. Although girls achieve better results than boys in English, there are no consistent differences in the results of boys and girls in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 11 are generally consistent with the results obtained in GCSE examinations. Standards in mathematics are well above expectations, while in English they are above. Standards in biology, chemistry and physics are well above expectations, while in contrast to the previous year, standards in double award science are above expectations. Pupils with English as an additional language are achieving well. Appropriately higher college targets have been set for 2002.

Although results in A-level examinations are overall below the national average, they represent good achievement relative to students' GCSE results. A-level results do not fully reflect overall standards and achievement in the sixth form. Many students with the highest GCSE grades follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme. Approximately half of sixth form students take the IB examinations and are very successful. The proportion of students gaining the full diploma in 2001 was significantly above the worldwide average. These results were above the 2000 results, which were also well above the worldwide average. When 2001 IB results are aggregated with A levels, the overall average point score is well above the national average for A levels. Although A-level results show a drop below those reported in the last inspection, this is of no great significance, owing to changes in the nature of the entry to the A-level courses and the increasing popularity of the IB programme. Sixth form results represent very good progress across Years 12 and 13. In 2001, the A-level results of boys were above those of girls, whereas there was little difference in the IB results. Sixth form students' attainment in lessons and in work seen during the inspection is generally above course expectations. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve well.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the college	Good, overall, having a positive impact on pupils' progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, with few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour either in lessons or around the college.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Older pupils, including sixth formers, mentor younger pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and from all backgrounds participate well in all aspects of the life of the college.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. The incidence of unauthorised absence is low. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

A small number of mainly younger pupils do not behave well in a few lessons, usually when they are not fully engaged in the learning activities. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years and fixed period exclusions are below average. Sixth form students feel they are treated as adults and respected. They have excellent attitudes and their personal development is very good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching and learning are good overall and better than at the last inspection. Examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects and of very good teaching in most, including support for pupils with physical disabilities or other types of special educational needs. Teaching and learning are particularly effective in English, art, dance, geography, history, music, modern foreign languages and science, and for pupils with physical disabilities. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory in the lower years and good in the upper years. There were examples of excellence in teaching in art, English and French. Literacy is well taught in English in Years 7 to 9 and is being given appropriate emphasis in all subjects. Numeracy teaching is satisfactory. In the great majority of lessons pupils concentrate and learn well. Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding. In the best lessons pupils learn systematically because work is effectively organised. However, weaknesses in planning and low expectations contributed to the few unsatisfactory lessons observed. These were in mathematics, drama and design and technology. Sixth form teaching is characterised by high expectations and challenging tasks that involve students in a suitable range of activities. Teaching of this quality makes a direct contribution to students' achievement.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good breadth and balance up to GCSE enable pupils to achieve well. Insufficient time is allocated to religious education for full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus. National Curriculum requirements in ICT, art and music are not met. There are weaknesses in curriculum planning for design and technology. Sixth form provision includes a very good range of A-level and IB subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision is well organised and carefully monitored. Very good support for pupils with physical disabilities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional	Very good. These pupils make very good progress as a result of the support they receive.

language	
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent overall and particularly strong in social, moral and cultural development. Adults provide very good role models. Opportunities for reflection provided in assemblies and many subjects contribute to pupils' spiritual development. The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
How well the college cares for its pupils	Pupils are very well cared for and information on their progress is used effectively to monitor and support their improvement.

Extra-curricular activities are excellent, including many dance, music, drama, sporting and revision activities. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is very good. Links with parents are effective; they work closely with the college in promoting good attendance. Insufficient time is allocated to religious education for full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus and planning and provision for the use of ICT does not meet fully National Curriculum requirements. Statutory requirements with regard to the use of computers in art and music are not met. The college does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, or religious education in the sixth form.

#### **HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the warden and other key staff	Very good leadership by the warden ensures clear direction, and good teamwork among senior managers generates a positive ethos. Assistant wardens carry heavy workloads and this causes inconsistency in monitoring and evaluating work in some areas. Excellent leadership of the sixth form. Strong leadership in many areas of the college has a significant impact on the progress of pupils, including the physically disabled.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very effective governing body. Other than the provision of collective worship and the full National Curriculum requirements in a few subjects, statutory requirements are fulfilled.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Planning, monitoring and evaluation, both of results and of priorities for improvement, are generally good, although there is inconsistency in monitoring and evaluation in some subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The college is increasing the range of opportunities on a very tight budget. The college seeks to get the best value when buying services and in making educational decisions.

All teaching posts are filled, with a good match between qualification and teaching responsibilities, but the college has found difficulty in recruiting teachers, partly owing to the cost of accommodation in the area. The college accommodation is barely adequate and some aspects are unsatisfactory. The appearance of the buildings is one of delapidation and its listed building status means that it is difficult to get any repairs or improvements done

quickly. More accommodation is needed, particularly for English, science, mathematics, the physically disabled unit and for lunchtime (dining) use. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum but there is a shortage of library books to support study in the sixth form.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard</li> <li>• Good teaching</li> <li>• Their children like the college</li> <li>• The approachability of the college</li> <li>• The college is helping their children become more mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The closeness with which college works with parents</li> <li>• Information on the progress their children are making</li> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The college provides parents with much good quality information on the progress pupils are making. Although the college provides one formal consultation meeting during the year, there can be a gap of up to fourteen months between these meetings. Parents feel that this is too long and inspectors agree. Pupils are well behaved and teachers use homework to good effect. The partnership between home and college is constructive and mutually supportive.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The international sixth form has 254 students, made up of broadly equal numbers of male and female students. The sixth form is larger than most and has increased by about 60 per cent since the last inspection. Although most of the students progress into Year 12 from within Impington College and 11 to 16 schools in Cambridgeshire, a substantial number join from schools abroad. Just over 30 per cent of students are drawn from 34 overseas countries. Thirty-four per cent of students speak English as an additional language, although only one is at an early stage of learning English. About ten per cent of students have special educational needs, including ten with Statements for moderate learning difficulties. These students join the sixth form to follow the independence, work experience and leisure course. Students are usually required to have achieved a grade C in an appropriate subject before embarking on an A-level course, although exceptions are made. About half of the sixth form are following GCE A-level courses and are able to choose from a range of 24 subjects, while the other half are following the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB), which offers a range of 26 subjects. Through a School of Performance, students with particular aptitudes in dance, drama or music are able to link performance with academic studies. At the end of Year 13, about 85 per cent of students continue their education, mostly at university, some after taking a gap year. A small proportion go on to further education and the remainder into employment.

The sixth form is part of the Cambridge Collegiate Board, which brings together two sixth form colleges, a college of further education and three school sixth forms to make joint arrangements for admissions to ensure breadth of provision for students in Cambridge and Ely. A number of Impington pupils choose to continue their studies after Year 11 in one of these other institutions. These pupils include some of the highest attaining pupils in the GCSE examination.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is very successful. Both the GCE A-level and IB results represent good, and sometimes very good, progress, resulting from very good teaching and learning. The sixth form caters well for its students and provides a rich environment for their personal development. Excellent leadership of the sixth form is contributing to continued improvement: provision is cost-effective.

#### **Strengths**

- Very good teaching and relationships enable students to achieve well.
- Students feel they are treated as adults and enjoy the sixth form: they become self-confident, articulate and independent thinkers.
- High levels of support ensure that overseas students are fully integrated in a sixth form community that is a very good model of international co-operation.
- Enthusiastic teaching and high levels of expertise lead to outstanding standards of public performance and very good achievement in performing arts.
- The very good range of courses caters well for students' aspirations and needs.
- Excellent leadership provides a clear direction for the development of the sixth form and is well supported by senior management, governors and staff of the college.

#### **What could be improved**

- The provision of a course in religious education for all students to meet statutory requirements.

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

## **THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS**

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.



Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Standards achieved by students at A level in 2001 were above the national average. Students achieved encouraging results in the 2001 AS-level examinations. As a result of consistently good teaching students make particularly good progress and achieve well.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Although standards in A-level examinations have been well below the national average over the past four years, achievement at the end of Year 13 is at least satisfactory. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Although GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were well below the national average, when standards of attainment on entry to the course are taken into account, the results represent good achievement on the part of students. Teaching is good.
Drama	<b>Very good.</b> Standards achieved by students in drama in the 2001 examinations were consistent with the national average. Students achieve well because teaching is very good.
History	<b>Good.</b> The overall standards achieved by students at A level were above the national average in 2001. As a result of good teaching, students make good progress and achieve well in terms of added value.
Psychology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Although the most recent A-level results were below average, they were broadly consistent with predictions based on standards of attainment on entry to the course. Teaching is satisfactory.
English literature	<b>Good.</b> Standards achieved in A-level examinations in 2001 were below average. Teaching is good, as is students' achievement when standards of attainment on entry to the course are taken into account.
IB Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Standards achieved by students at both the higher and standard level in 2001 were above the worldwide average. As a result of consistently good teaching students make very good progress and achieve well.
IB Biology	<b>Good.</b> Over the last three years results show a progressive rise and in 2001 were high in relation to the worldwide average. Students achieve well because teaching is good.
IB Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Standards overall are generally above the worldwide average, although numbers of students are too small to make meaningful statistical comparisons. The most recent IB examination results were well above average. Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
IB History	<b>Very good.</b> Results have been consistently good and the college has outperformed the worldwide average by an increasingly wide margin. In 2001 the percentage of students gaining the highest grade at higher level was over double the worldwide percentage. This is due to very good teaching.
IB French	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are above average. Rich extra-curricular opportunities and good teaching enable highly motivated students to sustain good progress and achieve well. Students' personal development is outstanding.

IB German	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average. Good teaching enables students to sustain satisfactory progress overall and to achieve well in understanding and speaking. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and students' personal development is outstanding.
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Lessons in physics, sports science, art, music, performing arts, English language and Spanish were sampled. The quality of teaching was generally good. Students are progressing well, particularly in Spanish and performing arts, where teaching is very good. Results have been generally mixed, and usually below average in A-level courses but above in IB courses. However, low student numbers on A-level courses make comparisons with national figures unreliable. Well-planned lessons are helping students to develop good understanding of the subjects they are studying.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Assessment is used effectively to guide students' progress. Students are known well individually and they receive very good guidance and support.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership of the sixth form is excellent. All activities are co-ordinated and monitored well. Performance is carefully analysed and evaluated and appropriate action taken to raise standards further. The strong commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity for all students is a feature of the sixth form.

#### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students enjoy the sixth form and would advise others to join</li> <li>• They feel they are treated as adults</li> <li>• The wide range of courses and extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• The very good teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about the progress they are making</li> <li>• Advice on what they should do when they leave college</li> </ul>

There are very few areas that cause any concern at all and students' overall views of the college are exceptionally positive. Students have reservations about only two areas: the extent to which they are kept informed about their progress and the amount of advice they receive about what they should do when they leave. Inspectors do not agree with these concerns and feel that the college provides well in both these areas.

#### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement “outstanding” in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The college's results and pupils' achievements**

##### *Main college*

1. The attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7, while covering a wide range, is above average overall. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were well above average, in comparison both with all schools and with schools containing similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals. These results are consistent with the results obtained in three of the last four years. Only in 2000 were the results above average rather than well above. The 2001 results in English, mathematics and science were all well above average. Girls tend to achieve higher standards than boys in English, while boys tend to achieve higher standards than girls in mathematics. There are no consistent differences between girls' and boys' performance in science
2. Comparisons of the results obtained in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 with the results obtained by the same pupils in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 show that pupils' achievement in all three subjects was good. This is reflected in the trend in the end of Year 9 test results. Over the past four years, these have risen at a faster rate than results nationally.
3. The 2001 Teacher Assessments and inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 to be at or above national expectations in almost all subjects. Standards in French are well above average and improving rapidly because of the investment the college is making in teaching French in the primary schools. Standards in design and technology, although close to average, are adversely affected by the rotational arrangement for teaching the subject. This arrangement interferes with pupils' learning in the subject. A similar rotational arrangement has an effect on standards in religious education, which at the end of Year 9 are below the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Although Teachers' Assessments in ICT show standards to be above expectations, inspection evidence indicates that these were overestimates and standards at the end of Year 9 are below. Girls achieved higher standards than boys in most subjects. However, the gap between the performance of boys and girls tends to be smaller than that observed nationally.
4. Although they remained above average, GCSE examination results showed a slight downward trend from 1998 to 2000. However, the results rose in 2001 to be well above average both for pupils gaining five subjects at the higher A\* to C grades and overall. The 2001 GCSE results were above average, relative to those in similar schools. In comparison with the results obtained by the same pupils at the end of Year 9 the GCSE results show good achievement overall.
5. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the 2001 GCSE English examination was above average. Although girls' results were better than boys', the difference was about the same as that observed nationally. In science, about three-quarters of the year group were entered for the double award examination, while the remainder were entered for separate examinations in biology, physics and chemistry. Although the results taken together were above the national average, the proportion of pupils obtaining A\* to C grades in the double award was below the national average, while the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C in the separate subject examinations was well above average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys in double science but lower than that of boys in chemistry and physics. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in mathematics in 2001 was well above average. One feature of these results was the substantial number of pupils who achieved the highest A\* and A grades. There was no significant difference overall in results obtained by boys and girls, although boys generally achieved more of the highest grades.
6. GCSE results in other subjects are mostly above national averages. Results in art and history show steady improvement since the last inspection and were well above average in 2001. Similarly, there has been an improving trend in results in modern foreign languages. The 2001

results in German were well above average, while in French and Spanish they were above. Results in English literature were well above average and in drama, geography, music, physical education, religious education and design and technology they were above. While boys do not achieve as well as girls overall at GCSE, both boys and girls achieve better than boys and girls nationally, and the gap between the performance of boys and girls tends to be smaller than the national difference.

7. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 11 to be generally consistent with the results obtained in GCSE examinations. Standards in both English language and English literature are above national expectations, reflecting good overall progress. Standards in biology, chemistry and physics are well above average, while in contrast to the previous year, standards in double award science are above national expectations. Above and well above average standards are seen in modern foreign languages, music and religious education, and reflect good progress in many lessons resulting from good teaching and well-planned lesson activities. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and this assists them to do well. The above average GCSE examination results obtained in drama were not reflected in work seen during the inspection. This is largely because teachers do not make expectations of the required standard of work clear enough. In ICT the progress of most pupils is adversely affected by the arrangements for the provision of the subject. Some pupils do not have any ICT lessons until Year 8, and none in Year 9. As a result many pupils are unable to reach or surpass national levels of attainment by the end of Year 9 and this affects standards in Years 10 and 11.
8. The achievement of pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Needs is generally good, relative to their prior attainment. The achievement of pupils supported by the physically disabled unit is very good: most obtain GCSE grades close to national expectations and some achieve high grades in both GCSE and A-level examinations. In 2001, all pupils on the special educational needs register achieved the goal of at least one A\* to G grade and many considerably exceeded their estimated grades. Pupils at all stages on the register make good progress, in line with their peers. This is largely the result of good levels of support and the good provision of suitable teaching and learning materials in subject areas. Pupils who are gifted and talented progress well, overall.
9. All of the pupils in Years 7 to 11 with English as an additional language are at an advanced stage of language acquisition or are bilingual and need no additional language support. Nevertheless, their progress is monitored and the standards they are achieving and the progress they are making are comparable with those of their peers.
10. The college makes effective use of targets to improve results. Targets are set annually, for results overall and in individual subjects. Targets usually exceed predictions and are generally exceeded.
11. Written work in English is well above average and in all subjects teachers pay good attention to literacy, so pupils progress well in writing and reading. Technical words are used appropriately. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar improve as pupils progress through the college. Opportunities are provided in most subjects for pupils to improve their reading and to extract relevant information. The reading levels of all pupils, including lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, are generally good enough to enable them to have access to the full curriculum. Younger pupils read fluently and the ability to read with expression improves as they move through the college. Numeracy across the curriculum is just starting to be developed, in line with the National Strategy. Written methods of calculation are very good throughout the college but the mental recall of number facts is slightly weaker, with too much reliance on the use of calculators for simple calculations. On the whole, pupils cope satisfactorily with numbers and mathematical ideas when they use them in different subjects and the teacher explains ideas clearly.

### *Sixth form*

12. Overall results of General Certificate of Education A-level examinations at the end of the sixth form are below the national average. However, many students with the highest grades at GCSE follow the increasingly popular International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programme. In each

year, approximately half of sixth form students take the IB examinations and are very successful. Direct national comparators are not available; however, the proportion of students gaining the full Diploma in 2001, at 98 per cent, was significantly above the worldwide average of 81 per cent. These results were above the 2000 results, which were also well above the worldwide average. Standards of attainment in the IB examination are high. The average point score obtained by candidates in the 2001 examination was above the worldwide average by a comfortable margin, with one of the very highest total point scores being obtained by a candidate from the college. When 2001 IB results are aggregated with A levels, the overall average point score becomes 22.4, which is well above the national average for A levels (17.5). The breadth of the curriculum on IB courses means that students have made very good progress across a broad range of subjects, as well as in depth in a chosen few. Sixth form results represent very good progress across Years 12 and 13. Students' independence in their learning and their capacity for research assist their progress in lessons and assignments. Extended essays, prepared for the IB, were of a standard that was significantly above the worldwide average. They represent considerable progress in handling and using information from a wide variety of sources and show unusual depth of understanding.

13. Sixth form students' attainment in lessons and in work seen during the inspection is generally above course expectations. Results for the IB in English at the end of the sixth form are well above average, when compared with worldwide averages and equivalent A-level grades. Students' extended essays show good response to challenging subjects.
14. Groups of students entering A level include a broader range of prior attainment than for those entering the IB examination. Although results were below the national average across the full range of A to E pass grades, the overall progress of students following A level in the sixth form is good. In 2001, the results of male students were above those of females, whereas nationally, the results of female students were above those of males. Although A-level results show a drop below those reported in the last inspection, when they were broadly consistent with the national average, this is of no great significance, because of changes in the nature of the entry to the A-level courses and the increasing popularity of the IB programme. Results in the AS-level examinations were mixed but satisfactory in most cases. Students who do not do well in these examinations have the opportunity to retake their examinations and improve their grades. About 80 per cent of the students in Year 11 generally stay on to the sixth form. Many of the students who do not stay on to the sixth form at Impington choose to take A-level or vocational courses at one of the other institutions that make up the Cambridge Collegiate Board. These students include some of the highest attaining students in the GCSE examination. The drop out rate in the sixth form is low.
15. In many subjects the numbers of students entered are small, so A-level results fluctuate and comparisons with national averages are unreliable. Nevertheless, in mathematics, music and history, results in 2001 were above average and in performing arts and media studies they were well above. Results in English literature, psychology, biology, chemistry and physical education were below average, while results in English language, physics, drama and sociology were broadly average. Inspection evidence shows standards to be consistent with expectations of A-level work in most subjects and below in only a few, notably in science. In some subjects, standards are above expectations, as in mathematics, music and performing arts. In all of the lessons observed, achievement was at least satisfactory and in just over 80 per cent of lessons students made good or very good gains in learning.
16. The college provides lessons in key skills and students are making good progress. Students' standards in communication and numeracy are generally good and they cope well with these aspects of their courses. Although there are at present no ICT related courses in the sixth form, A-level and IB courses in computing are being introduced in September 2002. A very small number of students are seeking qualification in Level 2 ICT key skills. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the use of ICT in the sixth form is satisfactory. A particularly strong feature is the use of the Internet by sixth form students following A-level and IB courses for research and independent learning. Year 12 students with special education needs use computers for searching the Internet and for word processing. Mathematics IB teaching in Year 12 is enhanced by the very good use of a statistics program that has been developed by a teacher in the college.

17. Analysis of the college's A-level results compared with the GCSE results of the same students shows good achievement. Students of all groups are making good progress, overall. The achievement of disabled students is very good. A small group of students with moderate learning difficulties follow the independence, work experience and leisure (IDEAL) course. These students successfully accumulate evidence in the six key skills areas of number, communication, ICT, learning skills, personal skills and practical work skills, for the National Skills Profile. The college makes effective use of targets to raise results overall. These are based on students' predicted and target A-level grades in relation to their GCSE performance.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

#### *Main college*

18. Pupils of all ages have good attitudes to learning and are well behaved. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are highly motivated and are keen to benefit from the very wide range of opportunities available. They come to the college in a positive frame of mind and are very proud to belong to Impington Village College. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and are based upon mutual trust and respect. Pupils feel confident about asking their teachers for help or clarification when it is needed. This atmosphere of support and understanding helps pupils to learn well and to make good progress in their work.
19. Pupils' behaviour during lessons is good. They know exactly what is expected and boys and girls behave equally well. The result is a lively but very harmonious community. The college has a very good atmosphere and this encourages pupils to work hard and to do their best. During lessons, pupils work constructively in small groups or pairs. For example, in a Year 10 geography lesson pupils worked well together as they used the Internet to research the effect of hurricanes on different locations. The college expects and achieves good standards of behaviour. This is evident when pupils move around the college between lessons and when they gather in large groups at break and lunch times. They listen attentively and respectfully and are willing to join in discussions during lessons. As part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, pupils consider issues such as bullying. Although both parents and pupils state that bullying does occasionally occur, pupils feel confident that teachers deal with such behaviour firmly and very effectively. During the inspection, unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in very few lessons. It usually arose because a minority of the pupils lacked motivation and expressed this by calling out and by repeatedly interrupting the teacher. Their more committed classmates, however, usually ignore this behaviour and do not allow it to affect their progress. There were no permanent exclusions during the last college year and the number of fixed period exclusions was below the national average.
20. This college is increasingly popular and space is limited. Some of the corridors become very crowded between lessons and there is a severe shortage of social areas. At lunchtimes pupils eat their packed lunches wherever they can. Although many find themselves sitting on the benches and carpet of the Promenade, they remain very cheerful and leave little litter behind.
21. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good. Members of staff provide very good examples of how to behave and address the pupils with respect and consideration. Pupils, in turn, speak highly of their teachers and a shared sense of common purpose helps to create a stable and calm atmosphere within which pupils make good progress. During lessons, pupils feel able to discuss their values and beliefs without fear of mockery or intimidation and this encourages pupils to take risks with their language and their learning. This is particularly important for those who do not have English as a first language and for those pupils with physical disabilities. All pupils mix freely and this is a testament to the international nature of the college community and the exceptionally successful policy for social and educational inclusion.
22. Pupils with special educational needs mix very well in the college and join in most activities. The support that pupils with physical disabilities receive from staff and other pupils helps them to participate fully in lessons. They display very good attitudes to the work and respond with patience and good humour. The college makes every effort to ensure that pupils with physical disabilities are able to take part in all educational visits. On the very few occasions that this is not possible it is always due to circumstances beyond the control of the college staff. Pupils with

behavioural difficulties respond well to the small group teaching in the Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) and Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) bases and to the support of assistants in mainstream classes.

23. Pupils' personal development is very good. Through a system of regular self-review, pupils track their own progress and help to decide upon their personal and academic targets. This ensures that they have a very good insight into their progress and helps them to identify how they can improve their work. For example, Year 9 pupils have a lengthy one-to-one meeting with their tutors in order to discuss their likes, dislikes and achievements in college and elsewhere. Pupils are helped to identify their personal goals in life and to decide upon the actions they should take in order to achieve them. In doing so, pupils devise their personal learning plans and they learn to recognise and confront their strengths, weaknesses and aspirations. Pupils get to know themselves very well and this helps them to become increasingly independent and effective learners.
24. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities. There is a well-established college council as well as year councils. These enable pupils to have a voice in the running of the college and to assume specific responsibilities. Pupils relish these opportunities and are keen to use their initiative. For example, as part of the Schools Environment Project, pupils are working towards fulfilling the criteria for the bronze award. They are currently engaged in the design of a wildlife area, the introduction of a recycling scheme and the organisation of regular litter picks around the college site. In addition, as part of the 'Partnership Against Bullying', pupils from Year 8 upwards are trained as mediators. They run a drop-in centre where pupils can go if they want someone to talk to. Pupils also undertake work experience at the end of Year 10 and the more able linguists are able to work abroad. Very good international connections are strengthened by a wide range of European residential visits. For example, pupils in Year 8 undertake an exchange visit to France and Years 9 and 12 engage in exchange visits with French, German and Spanish families. These visits really help pupils to mature and encourage them to use their initiative and to become increasingly aware of the wider world.
25. Attendance is satisfactory. The incidence of unauthorised absences is low at around half the national average. There is no difference between the attendance of boys and girls. Pupils usually arrive in good time for their lessons and this helps them to make the most of their time at college.

### *Sixth form*

26. Students' attitudes to the college and to their work are excellent. They are highly motivated individuals and members of staff fully acknowledge their considerable maturity and sense of purpose. The assumption is simple: that sixth formers are at this college because they want to be. On this basis, students are granted considerable autonomy and they indicate that they thoroughly appreciate being treated as responsible young adults. The very high level of students' commitment and initiative is reflected in the composition of the sixth form, with many students coming from overseas and from other schools within the United Kingdom. One in seven of the students live with a host family. This level of mobility and willingness to strike out on their own is a clear reflection of students' maturity and keen desire to learn.
27. As part of the inspection process, students were asked to complete a questionnaire. In addition, many spoke to inspectors during lessons and more formal discussions. They are exceptionally supportive of the college and can think of very little that they would like to change. Almost all who returned questionnaires indicated that they are enjoying their time in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. The sixth form is characterised by excellent international harmony and overseas students have nothing but praise for the way in which they have been helped to settle in and feel welcome.
28. Students behave very well during lessons and at other times of the college day. They are clearly committed to learning and can be relied upon to get on with their work both at home and at college. Members of staff do everything they can to support students, many of whom are living away from home. The atmosphere is one of very strong mutual support and wholehearted encouragement. Relationships between students and with members of staff are very good.



Students work very productively, either on their own or in groups. Usually using English as a common language, they offer each other help and encouragement and this helps them to produce work that is well above the expected standard. Students welcome visitors to their college and they are very helpful and polite. The high standard of their behaviour is reflected in the fact that there have been no exclusions for many years.

29. Students' personal development is very good; they are exceptionally mature, confident and highly articulate. Helped by the very good guidance programme, most will be ready for the next stage in their education by the time they leave. Students in Year 12 gauge their academic progress by plotting their examination results against national figures in order to work out whether or not they are on track to achieve their predicted grades. They also analyse their personal style of working and draw up a study timetable that is based upon their individual strengths and weaknesses. In this way, students are helped to make the most effective use of their time and the success of this programme of self analysis is reflected in the high standard of work seen. Students willingly take on responsibilities around the college and help others. For example, all sixth formers participate in the creativity, action and service (CAS) scheme. They devote one afternoon each week to a wide range of activities, including mentoring pupils in lower years. In addition, sixth formers help in the campaign against bullying and run an informal lunchtime 'drop in' centre.
30. Overall attendance is good. The college recognises the maturity and motivation of these young adults and relies upon them to register themselves two or three days a week. Students appreciate being trusted and willingly comply.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

### ***Main college***

31. Teaching and learning are good overall and better than at the last inspection. In lessons seen across Years 7 to 11, teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons, good or better in 67 per cent, very good in 21 per cent and excellent in four per cent of lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two per cent of lessons. Learning followed a similar pattern. Examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects and of very good teaching in most, including support for pupils with physical disabilities or other types of special educational needs. Teaching and learning were particularly effective in English, art, dance, geography, history, music, modern foreign languages and science, and for pupils with physical disabilities. Teaching and learning in mathematics are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Inspectors found homework was set throughout the college and generally effectively used.
32. General strengths in teaching include teachers' use of their knowledge to develop pupils' understanding, and good planning so that pupils learn in a carefully structured way. These features are evident in many English lessons. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils made rapid progress in understanding the difference between simple, complex and compound sentences because the lesson was well structured to build carefully on their previous learning. Similar strategies used in a Year 9 science lesson with lower-attaining pupils enabled them to make very good progress in predicting and measuring changes in temperature. In art, the teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning ensures that pupils build systematically on their existing skills. This was seen, for example, in an excellent Year 9 lesson, where pupils sustained intense concentration as they created robots from drawings of mechanical objects. In dance, teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge to challenge and raise the levels of pupils' performance. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson, for example, where pupils' balance

and precision of movement improved as they responded to the guidance of the teacher. In the best religious education lessons, teachers enhance pupils' understanding by means of appropriate illustrations. This was seen, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on morality and world trade. However, weaknesses in lesson planning and activities that were not well matched to the attainment levels of pupils contributed to unsatisfactory teaching in two lessons in mathematics.

33. The English department lays a very good foundation for the development of pupils' literacy skills. For example, Year 7 pupils' reading skills are enhanced because teachers show interest in the stories pupils are reading and provide many opportunities to talk about them. This was particularly evident in one excellent Year 7 lesson, where pupils became totally absorbed in a comparison of an original Anglo-Saxon story and a more modern version because of the teacher's lively and interesting approach to the topic. In the upper years appropriate texts engage pupils' attention and extend their understanding of the use of language, as in, for example, a Year 10 lesson, where pupils investigated how in 'Romeo and Juliet' the actions of different characters lead to the unravelling of the plot. Most subjects make effective contributions to the development of pupils' literacy skills. There are opportunities for pupils to plan, draft and rewrite their own work in English, geography, history and religious education. Support for the development of pupils' writing skills through the use of subject-specific key words, which are recorded in student planners and tested weekly. Pupils' reading skills are developed and consolidated through opportunities to read both silently and aloud in many lessons.
34. The systematic development of numeracy across all subjects in Years 7 to 9 is in its early stages. Pupils develop their numerical skills in many subjects. In mathematics lessons, teachers include activities to improve recall and pupils' mental arithmetic skills. Numeracy is also developed through measuring and judging proportion in art and design and technology, and in interpreting data in geography and science. However, although there are opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills in many subjects, these are not at present co-ordinated in any way. The college is in the process of tackling this issue. Teachers promote the use of ICT in many subjects. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 use word processing and desktop publishing programs for their work. This is particularly evident in modern foreign languages and humanities. In geography spreadsheets are used to produce graphs of climate information and in French Year 9 pupils are skilled at accessing information from the Internet. The teaching of the ICT course in Years 7 and 8 provides pupils with basic competences in the use of spreadsheets and databases. However, as with numeracy, pupils' ICT skills are not at present being developed in a co-ordinated way across all subjects.
35. Most teachers have high expectations and in lessons where these are communicated clearly to pupils, good progress and achievement result. In modern foreign languages, for example, pupils make good progress because of the enthusiasm and sense of enjoyment engendered by the challenging pace of lessons. This was seen in a Year 11 Spanish lesson where pupils made good progress in learning because of the teachers' continuous use of the foreign language. Teachers generally share their objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and review them at the end. As a result, most pupils are clear about what they are doing and become fully involved in their learning. This was evident in a Year 8 resistant materials lesson, where pupils made good progress in the

making of a spinning top because the teacher gave clear explanations and guidance on how their work could be improved. The clear explanation of learning objectives is also a feature of teaching in history. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, clear objectives and challenging questioning helped to consolidate pupils' understanding of medicine in the nineteenth century as the class revised for the GCSE examination. However, the teacher's low expectations were among the shortcomings in the unsatisfactory lesson observed in drama.

36. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to learn and develop skills. For example, very effective use is made of new technology to promote learning in modern foreign languages – as in one excellent Year 9 French lesson, where the teacher made highly effective use of computer technology and an interactive whiteboard to present new vocabulary and test its comprehension. Paired and small-group work is used well in many subjects. The very effective use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies in music helps to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils worked enthusiastically in small groups as they listened to a recording of Louis Armstrong and exchanged ideas on improvisation. In expressive arts, pupils in Year 10 work successfully in small groups devising presentations that integrate music, dance and drama. Small-group work is used effectively in English and religious education to discuss and extend pupils' thinking and to undertake investigations in science. Group work is also used effectively in physical education to develop pupils' skills. However, weaknesses in basic teaching strategies and classroom management contributed to unsatisfactory teaching in one design and technology lesson.
37. The quality of teaching by special educational needs teachers is good, and most learning support assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. Subject teachers have satisfactory awareness of pupils' Individual Education Plans and often use them in lessons. However, the plans are not all of uniform quality. In some subjects the plans lack clarity and do not have subject-specific targets. There is a need for increased monitoring of how the plans are being used to ensure that they provide the information that teachers need in order to guide their lesson planning. Many departments have benefited from the attachment of a special educational needs teacher with specific subject knowledge. In geography, for example, this has resulted in the development of resources that are particularly well suited to pupils' needs. Pupils with special needs are fully included in all lessons and their contributions are valued. Teaching within the physically disabled unit is good and sometimes very good. It is brisk and purposeful, and planned well to engage the interest of pupils and keep them abreast of their mainstream peers.
38. In most subjects teachers mark work regularly and pupils understand the grades they are given. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in mathematics and design and technology, where pupils are not given enough guidance on what they must do in order to improve the quality of their work. Pupils are taught to evaluate their own learning in several subjects: this is, for example, a good feature of lessons in English and art. However, evaluation is a weakness in drama, where pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve their roles and performance.
39. Pupils are well managed in most lessons. Experienced teachers know pupils well and usually have high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils nearly always respond by

working hard. Only in a few lessons was silliness or disrespectful behaviour observed. These mostly involved younger classes. Incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour usually occurred when pupils were not involved enough in lesson activities.

40. By the time pupils are in Year 11, most have developed good learning habits. They work systematically, record their work carefully and review their learning to gauge their own strengths and weaknesses. They have a good sense of how they are doing and readily ask if they feel they do not understand. Over the college as a whole learning is good in response to good teaching.

### *Sixth form*

41. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good and a little better than lower down the college. Teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all lessons and good or better in 81 per cent of lessons. In 36 per cent of lessons teaching and learning were very good and in three per cent of lessons, excellent. Key skills are separately and effectively taught. The teaching of the many students in the international sixth form who have English as an additional language is very good. Those who arrive with little English are given intensive language teaching. They continue to be monitored and supported once they have reached an independent level of language. They make very good progress and many are able to continue their studies through the medium of English at British universities. Students with special educational needs receive good support, especially those with physical disabilities. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs following the IDEAL course are good.
42. The sixth form provides a stimulating environment in which students' intellectual development prospers. Three aspects of teaching are key features of the sixth form learning environment: teachers' knowledge and understanding of their own subjects, their high expectations of what students can achieve, and their very good relationships with students.
43. Teachers apply their subject knowledge effectively in all subjects. This is seen on the IB course where students' extended essays show unusual rigour, breadth and imagination, fostered by teachers' own intellectual rigour, understanding of research skills and careful questioning and guidance. Essays in modern foreign languages, for example, are rich in ideas, with the best showing an ambitious range of expression. They are clearly argued and constructed. Modern foreign language teachers provide very good models in the use of language. Students make very good progress through hearing the authentic use of the foreign language. In English, teachers draw on their detailed understanding of literature to develop students' enjoyment of reading, and understanding of character. In mathematics and science, teachers' very good understanding of their subjects enables them to give clear explanations and use questioning well to involve students and help them progress, as, for example, in a Year 13 lesson on advanced applications of trigonometry. In history, teachers make excellent use of their subject knowledge in focused teaching that enables students to manipulate a wide variety of primary and secondary sources and support materials. One Year 12 class, for example, was observed making sophisticated evaluations of different websites, using the controversial term 'Black Power' on a computer search engine.

44. In lessons, high expectations and challenging tasks involve students at all levels of attainment in a suitable range of activities. For example, skilful teaching with high expectations produces outstanding levels of performance in performing arts. In drama, students are challenged to raise their levels of performance when they work with a professional actor. In art, students are constantly challenged and stimulated to improve their techniques through, for example, life drawing sessions and visits to galleries. Their personal records of the lives and work of notable artists are beautifully and uniquely presented and demonstrate a mature understanding of the aims, influences and methods used by the artists. In history, teachers encourage students to deepen their empathetic understanding, as seen in a Year 12 lesson where students were carefully grouped to assume the roles, and experience the difficulties, of the negotiators at the Versailles Conference. In mathematics, learning activities are generally well structured to challenge pupils at all levels of attainment. However, in a few lessons students were not required to think deeply enough about particular mathematical methods and why these methods work.
45. Very good classroom relationships form the basis of the very good teaching seen in the sixth form. Students make very good gains in knowledge because of the mature and supportive relationships in lessons and their positive response to the high expectations of teachers. There is an emphasis on personal research. The sharing of findings in groups leads to greater challenge as students try out their ideas on each other and come to more refined conclusions. The atmosphere established by teachers in most lessons is strongly collaborative and this provides students with the confidence to argue their viewpoints. This was seen, for example, in a Year 13 psychology lesson, where students discussed the strengths and weaknesses of an illustrative essay in a mature way. While expressing their own viewpoints strongly they were clearly willing to listen to and accommodate the views of others. Levels of concentration and students' involvement in lessons are high. In English and media studies, lessons are characterised by enthusiasm for the subjects, which results in high student motivation. Teachers know students well and target tasks appropriately. Marking is effective and the use of examination criteria and comments keep students well informed of their standards and how to improve, although comments are sometimes too brief and lack depth of analysis.
46. Sixth form students follow instructions conscientiously and are well motivated to do their best. Students who are starting to learn English and those with special educational needs concentrate hard and keep up in their lessons. The vast majority of sixth formers have the confidence to ask if they do not understand and are willing to take responsibility for their own learning. By the end of Year 13, they are well on the way to becoming mature adult learners.

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

##### ***Main college***

47. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for pupils' personal development. The college provides very good careers education and guidance and a very good alternative education programme for

those pupils who would benefit from a reduced National Curriculum. The curriculum caters for the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. Pupils are provided with good equal access and opportunities to learn. The college has made satisfactory progress in its curricular provision since the last inspection, although some of the weaknesses identified at that time remain today. Insufficient time is allocated to religious education for full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus and there are weaknesses in the mapping of pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum. Planning and provision for the use of ICT do not meet all National Curriculum requirements and pupils have too few opportunities to use computers in art and music. The college does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, or religious education in the sixth form. The teaching time of 25 hours a week meets government recommendations. The college identifies and makes very good provision for gifted and talented pupils and, in particular, those with aptitudes for science, dance, music and languages. All pupils are encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of enrichment activities that the college provides.

48. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 builds on very good links with the primary schools. These links have strengthened as a result of the college's gaining language college status. The college now deploys a member of the modern foreign languages team to teach French in the primary schools from which most pupils are drawn. This arrangement is proving to be effective and helping to raise standards in the subject. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, together with religious education, PSHE and ICT. These subjects provide a good range of appropriate and stimulating activities. Pupils on entry to the college are taught in mixed ability groups. Setting is introduced in mathematics and French at the end of the autumn term in Year 7. There are specific programmes for individuals as well as opportunities for withdrawal to work in small groups. French is the core foreign language for pupils in Year 7 and German is introduced as a second language from Year 8. In addition, pupils can follow courses in Japanese and Latin as extra-curricular activities. ICT is taught as part of a rotation of subjects within design and technology. It is intended that this provision should be supported by the use of ICT in other subjects. However, the college does not map pupils' experiences of the use of ICT in these other subjects with the result that there is no way of knowing if all National Curriculum requirements are being met. This is an issue that the recently appointed ICT co-ordinator is beginning to tackle. Because ICT is taught in the design and technology rotation, some pupils do not have any ICT lessons until Year 8 and none in Year 9. This has an adverse effect on standards. The rotational arrangement in design and technology also means that pupils are only taught each aspect of the subject once over a two-year period. The gaps between contact with the different aspects of design and technology interfere with the development of pupils' knowledge and skills in a continuous way. The recently appointed head of design and technology is producing an action plan to tackle this issue. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to study the three separate science subjects of biology, chemistry and physics. In order to accommodate this arrangement these pupils do not take design and technology and so do not receive their full entitlement in the subject.
49. Additional GCSE subjects, vocational courses and certificates of achievement, together with specifically tailored Programmes of Study for some pupils, enhance the breadth and relevance of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Pupils follow a common core of subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, religious education, and a

modern foreign language. PSHE and ICT are covered through a cross-curricular approach, although in the case of ICT there is no curriculum map showing how pupils' skills are being developed in the various subjects. The range of options has been extended since the last inspection to meet more effectively the needs of all pupils and to place an increasing emphasis on the vocational contexts of learning. The college now offers Part I General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) in leisure and tourism, health and social care, engineering and ICT. For some pupils this can mean following alternative courses at the local college and work placements. The provision of these courses increases considerably the range of achievement opportunities for pupils, particularly those for lower-attaining pupils. Some pupils follow a reduced curriculum that allows them to undertake a programme of study, including a day of work-related activity that is more suited to their needs. Higher-attaining pupils continue to study the three separate science subjects in Years 10 and 11. Those pupils who have a strong interest and ability in languages are able to take three languages. In doing so these pupils are unable to study design and technology or a subject from the humanities. These arrangements seriously weaken the prospect of these pupils taking design and technology after Year 11.

50. The aim of the college is for pupils with additional needs to be taught in the mainstream classes wherever possible and have access to the full curriculum. For those who need individual or small-group teaching in order to improve basic skills, this is organised in a way least likely to cause disruption to learning and the curriculum. Those who attend weekly literacy workshops in Years 7 to 9 do so instead of attending a humanities lesson and those with long-term literacy difficulties attend support classes instead of German. A few pupils are disapplied altogether from languages because of their particular needs. Catch-up classes are provided for those who need them and this is of particular benefit to some pupils with physical disabilities. The college has established Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 bases for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and Years 10 and 11. These bases act as secure and supportive environments for those pupils who may need additional care or an alternative programme of education. Referrals may be made to the bases for a variety of reasons. The main aim is to be proactive in supporting pupils who are experiencing difficulties that may lead to interruption in their education. The bases provide security, appropriate teaching and an opportunity for pupils to build self-confidence. The success of the bases is seen in the nurture groups in Years 7 and 8 and in the maintenance in full-time education of older pupils whose attitudes and behaviour might have led to exclusion from college. Some of these pupils have gained an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award in the base.
51. The college makes very good provision for gifted and talented pupils. It identifies gifted pupils as the top ten per cent in each year group and talented pupils are identified within individual subject areas. The college has developed a range of strategies to meet the needs of these pupils effectively. For example, pupils can study the three separate science subjects in Years 9, 10 and 11 and take part in a range of science challenges. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 can study Latin and other able linguists have a wide choice of languages including Japanese and Spanish. Talented performers work with professional musicians and dance companies such as London Contemporary Dance, and take part in workshops with, for example, the Royal Shakespeare Company. Talented athletes compete at suitably challenging levels for their age and ability. Talented pupils with physical disabilities compete in international swimming events.

52. The PSHE programme gives pupils good opportunities to explore a wide range of moral, social and health issues. Although the co-ordinator is new to the post, she has conducted a very thorough audit of the programme and knows exactly how each strand is taught throughout the curriculum. The planned programme is complemented by countless less formal events and opportunities that pervade the everyday life of the college. The result is that pupils develop relevant personal skills and enjoy access to the information that they need to make informed decisions about their personal and academic lives. The wide range of modules meets the needs of pupils well and, as schemes of work are being reviewed, opportunities for citizenship are being systematically built in. Occasionally, the timetable is collapsed in order to enable pupils to address certain issues in more detail. Topics range from learning about relationships in Year 7 to a focus day in Year 10 that concentrates on issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees. Pupils learn about the law and parenting and they develop a growing awareness of how society works and the importance of citizenship. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their social skills through group and paired work in the classroom. Sports clubs and teams, outdoor and adventure activities, field trips and a wide range of residential visits also contribute. The extent to which form time is used to promote PSHE, however, is variable and, as yet, there is only limited monitoring of how the various strands are delivered. The college is aware of this shortcoming, however, and plans are being formulated to ensure more thorough monitoring and evaluation of lessons.
53. The college is developing effective strategies for teaching literacy across the curriculum. A successful literacy summer school was held last year providing a very timely boost to pupils before they entered the college. Within English the adoption of the Key Stage 3 framework and literacy strategy has made a significant impact on pupils' speaking and listening, building on their experiences from the primary schools. The additional teaching period added to English in Year 7 is used very effectively to provide higher attaining pupils with the opportunity to study Latin. Other pupils are provided with additional work in English to raise their overall performance. Other subject departments are becoming more aware of the importance of developing pupils' literacy. Most classrooms have displays of key words and teachers understand the importance of focusing on language in their marking. Although there are opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills in many subjects, these are not at present linked in any way. The college is in the process of tackling this issue. Within mathematics the recommendations of the Key Stage 3 framework and numeracy strategy have been implemented in Year 7 with the intention to extend this to Years 8 and 9.
54. The very good quality of the college's provision for careers education and guidance ensures that pupils receive the appropriate advice needed to make choices at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. The careers education programme is taught from Year 9 as part of the PSHE programme and aims to ensure that pupils are well informed about career opportunities so that they can become realistic planners for their own futures. They benefit from a programme that includes preparation for option choices and attend an information evening before making their Year 10 option choices. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are given all the essential information about choices at 16, and attend open evenings and conventions designed to offer pupils information about courses in the other centres of the Cambridge Collegiate Board and about career opportunities. The



careers teacher works in close partnership with the local further education college and pupils receive comprehensive advice on courses they can take up after they leave college. This guidance, along with a work experience placement at the end of Year 10, prepares pupils well for their life after college and gives them a good insight into the world of work.

55. Provision for extra-curricular education is excellent and a strength of the college. Many extra-curricular activities are offered through subjects. Because of this, the activities are woven into the life of the college in such a way that they not only offer pupils a range of different achievement opportunities but also enhance and extend the college curriculum. Both participation rates and standards of performance in extra-curricular activities are high, particularly in the performing and expressive arts, modern languages and physical education. The numerous activities include visits abroad, college productions and subject-based clubs, as well as opportunities to take part in workshops alongside professional actors and artists. A sports club includes physically disabled pupils from other schools in the area.
56. The college has very good links with other schools and colleges and the local community. These diverse links are used very constructively to enrich the curriculum and to broaden pupils' social experience. The college provides a youth service and offers counselling and guidance to pupils and their families who may be experiencing difficulties. In order to enhance pupils' motivation, volunteers from local businesses come into college in order to mentor individual pupils in Years 10 and 11. The college makes good use of the community to find placements for pupils who undertake extended work experience with local employers. The ways in which community links are used are tailored closely to the needs of each individual and are used to very good effect. The college plans to strengthen the existing links with its contributory primary schools and is very pro-active in offering them practical and educational help and support. Prior to the new intake at the start of each academic year, all the contributory primary schools are visited and nominated members of staff from every subject liaise with their counterparts at primary level. Curricular links are very good and these are reinforced by shared dance and drama performances as well as sporting events. Several subjects offer shared staff training; for example, the science department offers sessions to science co-ordinators at the named primary schools. These links help to ensure that pupils enjoy a smooth transition at the start of the academic year and that they settle down quickly once they arrive. Links with other sixth form providers are very good. The college is part of the Cambridge Collegiate Board and joint admission arrangements ensure breadth of provision for pupils in Cambridge and Ely.
57. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. It is promoted mainly through assemblies, which pupils usually attend once each week, and through several subjects in the curriculum, including PSHE and religious education. Assemblies observed were on the theme of the week, 'Fair Trade', at which presentations were made by pupils. These presentations included readings linking the theme with economic inequalities and exploitation of developing countries. Each assembly included a moment for thought and reflection. In all assemblies, sixth form students performed a piece of original dance which set the scene for the reading of a 'Fair Trade' prayer, which created a poignant sense of the spirituality of the occasion. Assemblies were useful not only as opportunities for pupils to share their intentions and concerns for others, but also as occasions to

demonstrate how effectively the college has fostered, in all its pupils, an appreciation of performance, based on the understanding of how performance is an expression of human endeavour. The college's religious education programme provides opportunities for pupils to think for themselves about universal issues and aspects of the curriculum in art, music, and in English also contribute to the development of spirituality.

58. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. Adults set the highest of examples for pupils and ensure good order in the college. Teachers impart high expectations of behaviour and communicate a strong sense of right and wrong through the reinforcement of the college's code of conduct, which is accepted and practised by pupils and supported by parents. The reward system promotes the positive aspects of self-discipline, co-operation and consideration for others. The college's provision for pupils' moral development allows pupils to express and enact their own understanding of the code, which takes into account the needs and feelings of others. As a result, a very high degree of racial and religious harmony permeates the college community. Moral development is also fostered through a variety of topics in PSHE, some of which increase pupils' understanding of citizenship. In physical education, pupils' awareness is raised about issues such as taking drugs and cheating in games. In history, moral issues surrounding the use of the atomic bomb at the end of World War II are discussed. Ethical issues such as euthanasia and abortion are discussed in religious education and the need for examining ideas from different viewpoints is fostered in many lessons and in the life of the college. In English, pupils experience a range of literature and discuss moral issues arising from it. They consider why characters behave as they do, as, for example, in 'Goodnight, Mr Tom'. In a Year 10 science lesson, pupils discussed the ethics of research involving human genes. Outside college pupils are actively involved in projects and campaigns, which demonstrates their active commitment to moral matters. For example, pupils are involved with Amnesty International, and the 'East-West' project, which helps foster harmony between the host community and refugees from the countries that comprised the former Yugoslavia.
59. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility, for example through participation in year and college councils, as captains of sports teams, and through Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes. Older pupils help younger ones on a regular basis. Pupils and students from Years 8 to 13 receive training to act as mediators in disputes, including bullying. Sixth formers help in mentoring younger pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 help pupils in Year 7 with reading during tutor time. The college takes active measures to improve the social skills of pupils who have problems in this aspect of their development, for example through the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 bases and the college's inclusion project. There is an excellent programme of opportunities to work in the community. Year 10 pupils do two weeks of work experience, a few of them abroad. 'Millennium Volunteers' spend 25 to 50 hours on a project within the community, leading to an award. Nominated pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive business mentoring, which improves their motivation. Work in subjects contributes significantly. In many subjects pupils collaborate regularly in their work and learn to respect each other. Simple procedures such as the seating of boys next to girls contribute significantly. In English, pupils study texts that focus on issues such as democracy and homelessness, and social issues are discussed by sixth formers in various foreign languages. These issues are also addressed in assemblies. Some sixth formers and Year 11 pupils have

achieved Junior Sports Leader status and coach youngsters in primary schools. Pupils learn to co-operate in performances in dance, music, and drama, and many benefit from participation in the vast range of visits and exchanges at home and abroad. Physically disabled pupils are well included in the routines of the college and are well accepted and regarded by other pupils. The many foreign students who join the sixth form are very well integrated into the college's truly international community.

60. Cultural provision is excellent. Through the international nature of the college and most curriculum subjects, the college provides pupils with numerous opportunities to deepen their understanding of their own culture and that of others. It is reinforced by organised visits to other countries and through visits to London theatres and places of local historic and cultural interest. This is particularly evident in modern foreign languages, where pupils' knowledge of their own and others' cultural traditions are enhanced through exchanges and work experience in France, Germany and Spain. Pupils' multicultural awareness is promoted in religious education, where different religions are explored, and in English, where pupils read poetry and texts from other cultures. In art, pupils study Aboriginal and Indian art and make African masks. In music pupils compose pieces based on their experiences of listening to Indian, Javanese, African and American blues music. Racial tolerance is discussed during form time and reinforced by studying the holocaust and more recent atrocities in history lessons.

#### *Sixth form*

61. The curriculum provision for the international sixth form is very good. Its strength is its breadth, creating opportunities for students with a wide range of interests, abilities and cultural diversity to study courses that are very flexible and varied. Students' choice depends upon their individual performances in the GCSE examination, or its equivalent, and background. Courses are well matched to students' aspirations and needs. This enables the college to offer a very good range of subjects, including 24 GCE AS and A2 levels, 26 subjects for the IB Diploma, and a School of Performance for students with particular aptitudes in dance, drama or music to link performance with academic studies. In addition, the IDEAL course provides students with moderate learning difficulties the opportunity to develop their independence through study, work experience and leisure activities. Through the horticulture course students have developed a mini-enterprise scheme to grow and sell plants. The proceeds from this have been used to provide additional resources for the course.
62. All these courses are proving to be highly successful and are strengths of the sixth form curricular provision. They underpin the growing reputation of this international sixth form. Students are provided with a very wide variety of routes to employment and both further and higher education. There is also a considerable range of enhancement courses and opportunities for students, such as key skills and numerous debates, meetings and events. Some students are able to retake their GCSE mathematics and English examinations to improve their grades. The sixth form has recognised the importance of providing students with a very broad range of opportunities and experiences and this has resulted in a steady increase in take up in Year 12. The increase in the range of subjects offered is a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, the statutory requirement to provide religious education in Years 12 and 13 is not met.

63. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good. The assistant director of the sixth form effectively manages the programme. Students receive very effective support and guidance in respect of higher education in the UK and abroad, including application to Oxford and Cambridge, and about employment and further training.
64. Students follow a very well planned programme of complementary studies. All students are required to participate in the CAS programme where they are able to choose activities from an exceptionally wide range. For example, during the spring term, students could learn African drumming, how to perform Japanese dances, edit a short film and learn how to make a clay sculpture. These activities provide students with an extensive breadth of experience and make a significant contribution to their personal development. As part of the CAS programme students also engage in a good range of community work. For example, they help in local primary schools and hospitals. Students take part in successful Young Engineer and Young Enterprise schemes. As part of the Young Enterprise scheme, artwork is leased to local companies and any profits made are used to provide additional resources for the art department or donated to charity.
65. Support for students' personal development is effectively organised throughout the year. Whole days are devoted to exploring a range of issues, including careers education and guidance. Day conferences are held frequently for all sixth form students. These occur each term and focus on issues such as health, global citizenship and independent learning. A very successful day was held during the inspection week in which the focus was on asylum seekers. Visits and external conferences extend opportunities directly provided by the college. Although there is no direct provision for religious education in the sixth form, the ethos of cultural diversity that exists is openly embraced and acts as the motivator for religious beliefs to be explored within the curriculum. Overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Students in the sixth form are expected to undertake work experience, including placements abroad, and not only for those taking modern languages. Students are also encouraged to take an active part in the wider college and through the sixth form council. Sixth formers are seen around the college supporting younger students. They contribute strongly to musical events and dance and drama performances. A variety of cultural events and visits and the very nature of the international sixth form contribute to students' personal development. Field visits in biology and geography and visits abroad in history enable students to apply their learning and improve their skills in relevant subjects. Drama, music and art students benefit from visits to theatres, concerts and galleries in London. Overall, the range of opportunities for enrichment is excellent.

## HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

### *Main college*

66. Provision for pupils' welfare is very good. It is underpinned by a very effective pastoral system that provides pupils with very good academic and personal support and guidance. There are very good links with the contributory primary schools and incoming Year 7 pupils receive very good support. This quality of care helps pupils to settle down quickly once they arrive and this helps them to make good progress in their work. Routine health and safety procedures are in place, although a few items of concern were drawn to the attention of the governors. Child protection procedures are good and all statutory requirements are met.
67. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Pupils stay with the same form tutor and year heads as they move from Year 7 to Year 9, changing only when they move into upper college. Tutors closely monitor pupils' attendance, punctuality and their personal planners. As well as encouraging a basic work ethic, this also helps tutors to spot any personal problems the pupils may have. The roles of tutors and year heads are intrinsically linked to the work of the two assistant wardens with responsibility for maintaining an overview of pupils' welfare within upper and lower college. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and this helps to ensure that any emerging problems are identified and tackled at any early stage. Pupils have regular individual progress reviews with their tutors as they move through Years 7 to 11. As part of these reviews pupils are helped to evaluate the personal and academic progress they have made over the intervening period, and to formulate action plans to tackle the areas for improvement. As a result, pupils have a very clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses and their targets for improvement. Year 9 pupils undertake a particularly detailed review of their skills and qualities and devise a personal learning programme. Pupils identify personal goals and career aspirations and what they have to do in order to achieve these goals. This detailed system of self-review helps pupils and tutors alike to monitor their personal development and identify when additional support is needed.
68. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are good. Their progress is closely monitored, through standardised testing and through reviews of their Individual Education Plans. The progress and achievement of physically disabled pupils are very well monitored. The college fulfils its statutory duties to monitor and review the provision for pupils with special educational needs and to plan for transition to the next stage of education. The provision described in Statements of Special Educational Needs is generally fully implemented. However, some statutory requirements are not met for reasons beyond the control of the college. While there is good co-operation with the health authority, speech and language therapy is not currently provided, nor have programmes of speech therapy been drawn up to be delivered by college staff and monitored by speech and language therapists. This is having an adverse effect on pupils' communication and makes their social integration more difficult.
69. Procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour are very good. Members of staff provide very good examples of how to behave and they are very consistent in their

expectations. Pupils have a very good idea of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The college's high expectations are reflected in the good behaviour seen during the inspection. There are close ties with outside agencies and a wide range of different types of support is available for pupils who have particular problems. The college's policy for social and educational inclusion is very successful and pupils who are at risk of exclusion receive very good support. Individual and family therapy is available and, depending on the exact nature of the problem, disaffected pupils may spend part of the week in the Key Stage 3 and 4 bases. Within a calm and supportive atmosphere, pupils receive educational and personal support that is closely matched to their individual needs. The absence of any permanent exclusions and the below average level of fixed period exclusions is a testament to the effectiveness of this support. Procedures for dealing with bullying are very effective. Should pupils behave inappropriately or be late to lessons, they may be placed on report or given a detention. This system of sanctions is very flexible and can be adapted to suit the individual misdemeanour.

70. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Pupils who achieve particularly good attendance receive a certificate and the college is scrupulous in following up each and every unexplained absence. Teachers take the register at the start of every lesson or assembly using an electronic registration system. This ensures that the college is able to monitor individual attendance very closely. These procedures are very effective and are reflected in a level of unauthorised absences that is half the national average. Pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern are reported to the head of year and, if necessary, to the relevant assistant warden. Pupils who have particularly poor attendance may undertake extended work experience within the community or may be referred to the Key Stage 3 and 4 bases. Here, pupils are very well supported and, on average, they manage to double their rate of attendance.
71. The college's policy relates assessment to curricular planning, marking, judgements on attainment and setting targets for improvement. This provides very good guidance to teachers, and overall procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are good. There are very clear roles and responsibilities for form tutors, year heads, heads of school and assistant wardens for both lower and upper college. All staff have had recent training on the assessment policy and practice, although there is a need for increased monitoring to ensure consistency of approach across all subjects. This is particularly necessary for the cross-curricular approach to ICT, an issue identified at the time of the last inspection report. The good practices identified in some subject areas in the last inspection report continue to be models of good practice. Statutory requirements for assessment and reporting are met.
72. An emerging strength of the college is the comprehensive database that has been created of pupil attainment. Included in this database are results from the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, reading and spelling test results and the scores from the Middle Years Information System (MIDYIS), which is a national data gathering and analysis system. These scores are used to provide information on which setting and predictions of future performance are based. National test results from primary schools are used to set targets for performance at the end of Year 9. The analysis of examination results and test results provides a rich source of information that is used to guide curricular planning and to track the individual performances of

pupils. At the core of the college's assessment policy is the expectation that departments and subject teachers will monitor pupils' progress regularly.

73. Target setting and monitoring are particularly strong in the two years leading up to the GCSE examination. The college is rigorous in its use of the Year Eleven Information System (YELLIS), which provides reliable predictions about pupils' performance in the GCSE examination. This information is used effectively to counsel pupils about post-16 option choices. There are good arrangements for form tutors to check regularly with pupils how well they are doing and whether they are doing well enough. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own progress and to set themselves targets related to each subject. These are included in reports to parents. Assessment information is also used effectively to evaluate the performance of departments in external tests and examinations.
74. The benefit of the college's approach to assessment is that pastoral and curriculum teams work closely together to support pupils' progress. The intention is that they will use these analyses to evaluate individual pupils' performances, compare the outcomes of different teaching groups and set the college's performance against national figures. Very good use is made of assessment information to guide lesson and curriculum planning in, for example, English, modern foreign languages and humanities. In English, assessment information is used effectively to identify pupils in Year 7 who would benefit from working with literacy progress units or those pupils who would benefit from the opportunity of studying Latin. However, there is at present no system for assessing pupils' ICT capability across the curriculum. Marking is effective and regular in most subjects and linked to GCSE requirements in Years 10 and 11. However, there are some inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work in mathematics and design and technology. Marking also provides pupils with guidance on what they need to do to improve the presentation of their work but not enough guidance is given on what pupils need to do in order to improve their subject-specific skills in some subjects. Assessment by teachers in English, mathematics and science closely matches the achievements of pupils in national tests at the end of Year 9.

### *Sixth form*

#### **Assessment**

75. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress in the sixth form are very good. Teachers know individual students well and remind them of ways of improving their work in lessons. In most subjects teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their own progress by providing them with the specifications for the qualifications they are working towards. The involvement of students in monitoring and improving their own progress is a strong feature of the sixth form. Regular checks are made by tutors, who keep detailed records of all matters relating to students' progress. This careful monitoring of students' progress and the effective use of target setting contribute to students' progress in the sixth form with many exceeding their initial grade predictions. Subject teachers regularly inform tutors and the sixth form management team of students' progress. Reviews of progress are made at the end of Year 12 and decisions made about whether a student should continue into Year 13. The college is rigorous in its use of assessment information that provides reliable

predictions about students' performance in the A2 level examination. Initially, students' targets are based on their performance at GCSE or its equivalent. Arrangements for the assessment of physically disabled students are very good, as they are lower down the college.

76. Information on academic progress and many aspects of personal development are well documented in records of achievement during Year 12 and form the basis of references for employers and universities, which are usually completed in Year 13. Formal reports provide parents with good information on students' progress and achievement.

*Advice, support and guidance*

77. The college has successfully struck the delicate balance between granting sixth form students considerable autonomy and managing to provide very good educational and personal support and guidance. Around one third of sixth form students are from abroad and, along with their peers, their views of the sixth form are exceptionally positive. Almost all the students completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and they feel that they receive strong and sensitive support from the college and that they were made to feel very welcome when they arrived. There are effective procedures to ensure students' health and safety.
78. Students receive good advice and guidance in relation to their studies. Students endorse this positive view and agree that the advice they received when choosing their courses was helpful and constructive. They would, however, like to have more information about how they are getting on and whether or not they are likely to achieve their target examination grades. Inspectors disagree and feel that students are kept well informed in relation to their studies. During their first term, all Year 12 students receive a settling in report that comments upon the standard of their work in each subject, along with a general comment and details of any causes for concern. Students also plot their examination results from Year 11 against national norms in order to check whether or not they are on line to achieve their target grades in Years 12 and 13. Students who are at risk of underachieving are identified by referral or by monitoring of the academic records. In addition, students' targets are regularly reviewed and this information is supplemented with assessment information from the subject areas. Teamwork within the sixth form is exceptionally good and underpins the college's very effective procedures for students' personal and academic support and guidance.
79. The advice and support on future careers are very good and information is provided at key points throughout the sixth form. Students are encouraged to attend university open days. Links with universities and employers are very good and the advice provided about entry to higher education is of high quality.



## **HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

### ***Main college***

80. The college places great emphasis on working closely with parents and views a close partnership between home and college as being fundamental to its work. Links with parents are good and the overwhelming majority support their children well. Parents ensure that their children attend regularly and their encouragement helps to ensure that their children work hard and achieve their very best. The college makes every effort to ensure that parents are appropriately involved in the annual reviews of pupils with special educational needs.
81. The college enjoys a very good reputation within the local area and is oversubscribed. Parents think highly of the college and their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that they are pleased with almost all aspects of the college's work. Views expressed by those who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting were equally positive. Although there are few specific concerns, around one in four parents would like more information about the progress their children are making. The college provides one formal consultation meeting during the year and thus fulfils the legal requirement. However, up to fourteen months can pass between these meetings. Parents feel that this is too long and inspectors agree. Nevertheless, parents indicate that they would feel able to approach staff at any time if they had any concerns and wanted to discuss their children's progress. The college newsletter, 'Imprint', helps to keep parents well informed and pupils' annual reports include much useful information. The reports provide parents with clear information about the courses their children have been studying, how much effort they are putting in and the levels at which they are working. Although they contain many pertinent comments, they do not report on pupils' work in ICT.
82. Around one in five of the parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed misgivings about pupils' behaviour, the amount of homework set and the closeness of the partnership between home and college. Inspectors do not agree with these concerns. Students are well behaved and teachers use homework to good effect. The partnership between home and college is constructive and mutually supportive.
83. The impact of parents' involvement in the day-to-day life of the college is good and they encourage their children to work hard and to do their best. The Friends of the College Association is well supported and it organises various fund-raising and social activities. A significant sum of money is raised each year and some of these funds have recently been donated to the John Brackenbury Foundation and to help support humanities and community education.

### ***Sixth Form***

84. As part of the inspection process, students were asked to complete a questionnaire and many also spoke to inspectors during lessons and more formal discussions. There are very few areas that cause any concern at all and students' overall views of the college are exceptionally positive.

85. Parents too are very pleased with many aspects of the sixth form. Although one third of the students come from abroad and another third join the sixth form from other schools in the UK, their shared confidence is reflected in the fact that only a very small number of students do not complete their courses of study. Students feel that the standard of teaching is very good and they particularly appreciate the fact that teachers make themselves readily available to provide additional help when it is needed.

## HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

### *Main college*

86. The college is very capably led and managed. Overall direction is clear and a commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all permeates the work of the college. Annually, appropriate targets for results are agreed and these are helping to further raise standards. The warden offers very effective leadership in planning for improvement and co-ordinating the work of the college. Together with the warden, five very competent assistant wardens make up the senior management team. These senior managers work effectively as a team and share the warden's vision and enthusiasm to continue to improve the college. Each has clear line management responsibilities through which middle managers, such as heads of department and heads of year, are held accountable to senior management. However, because the assistant wardens carry substantial departmental or other responsibilities in addition to their roles as senior managers, their workloads are too heavy. The range of their responsibilities is too wide and as a result there is some inconsistency in monitoring and evaluating work in some areas. This is interfering with the rate at which progress is being made.
87. Leadership in most areas of the college is very good - it is strong in English, science, art, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, dance and the physically disabled unit. This quality of leadership has a significant impact on students' progress. At the time of the inspection, an acting head of department had charge of mathematics pending the appointment of a permanent head of department. The arrangement is unsatisfactory because a clear direction is not being provided for the development of mathematics and numeracy in the college. The recently appointed head of design and technology is managing the department effectively and has quickly gained an appreciation of the strengths and areas for improvement in the subject. Similarly in ICT, the newly appointed co-ordinator is developing an action plan to tackle the deficiencies in the organisation, planning and assessment of ICT across the college. Leadership in religious education is effective. However, the head of department does not have enough time to monitor the work of teachers of the subject on a daily basis. Staff with responsibilities have regular meetings with all teachers; consultative arrangements are good. Commitment to improvement is generated across the college. For example, all departments are taking practical steps to improve standards of literacy, to enhance support for pupils with special educational needs and to continue to raise the performance of boys.
88. The college management promotes an atmosphere in which pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are encouraged to participate and achieve highly. The leadership and co-ordination of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator, the governor with responsibility for special needs, special educational needs teachers and the learning support assistants make an effective team. The special needs department is well staffed. The balance between small group teaching and the deployment of teachers and learning support assistants to provide support in lessons is effective. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are good and all staff are kept up to date and well informed of pupils' needs. There are link teachers between subject areas and the special needs department, and in-service training is provided to help strengthen the work of teachers and learning support assistants. Annual review procedures are efficiently

managed and there are good links with parents. Management of the key stage bases is good. Monitoring and assessment procedures are good and there are good links with subject teachers to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the pupils' learning across the curriculum.

89. The governing body is very effective. It has a good committee structure and sufficient expertise to monitor the work of the college effectively. Governors fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities. The exceptions are ensuring a daily act of collective worship, the full National Curriculum requirements with regard to the use of ICT in art and music, and the provision of religious education in the sixth form. Governors receive regular, detailed reports from the warden and other senior members of staff and make visits to the college to keep in touch with the subjects with which they are linked. Through these reports and visits governors have good awareness of the college's strengths and weaknesses.
90. The management of college finances is satisfactory. The level of funding from the Local Education Authority is a cause of concern to the college. Although when compared to national figures the total income per pupil is close to the national average, income is lower than that of the neighbouring authorities. Because teacher and support staff costs are above average the college is managing a budget deficit. Governors are working closely with the senior management team, the newly appointed finance manager and the Local Education Authority on a plan to eradicate the deficit over a three-year period.
91. The College makes good use of new technology. For example, the modern foreign languages department has benefited enormously from the new media suite. Good use is made of new technology for administrative purposes, although there is a need for the college to have a strategic plan for the purchase and replacement of hardware and software. The college has a good sense of best value in all purchasing. There is clear linkage between departmental expenditure and the college development plan, with resources being allocated to departments as a result of a careful appraisal of needs. Good procedures are in place for monitoring the use of resources. The college receives larger allocations for special educational needs than most schools, because of the funding received for the physically disabled unit. This, and all other additional funding received by the college, is used for the intended purposes. Action has been taken to attend to the issues raised in the most recent auditor's report. When account is taken of the amount of money coming into the college and its overall effectiveness, the college provides good value for money.
92. Many strengths in leadership and senior management have been maintained and strengthened since the last inspection. The warden took up post shortly after the last inspection and instituted a major review of priorities and the management structure of the college. This has led to a simpler line management structure with more clearly defined management responsibilities. At the last inspection, it was reported that, although there were individual strengths within the senior management team, it had yet to develop coherence as a team with collective responsibility for moving forward on whole-college issues. Senior managers now work closely together and teamwork is very good. The key issues of the last report have been tackled vigorously and good progress has been made. In order to improve provision for pupils' spiritual development a

compulsory GCSE short course in religious education has been introduced and each year group has an assembly on one day each week. However, the college is still unable to provide a daily act of worship. The pastoral monitoring of pupils has been strengthened by the introduction of procedures for reviewing the academic as well as the personal progress of pupils. A much wider range of extension activities has enhanced the quality of education provided for gifted and talented pupils. More effective use is being made of analyses of examination performance to monitor and improve the performance of boys. Although differences in performance between boys and girls remain, in many subjects these differences are much less than the national difference in performance between boys and girls. Additional resources have been allocated to improve the provision of books both in the library and in classrooms, and to extend the use of ICT across the curriculum. The college development plan is carefully costed and staff development is closely linked to curriculum development. Through a regular and well-structured series of meetings, all staff are given the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good and the college has good capacity for further improvement.

### **Resourcing**

93. Almost all teachers are suitably qualified by training and experience to cover appropriate aspects of the curriculum, including special educational needs. The number of teachers leaving and joining the college over the past two years has been above the national average. This has been due largely to promotion and to teachers leaving the profession. The college has found difficulty in recruiting teachers partly because of the cost of accommodation in the area. There has been some lack of continuity but in most areas of the curriculum standards have not been adversely affected. Although the mathematics departments was without a permanent head of department at the time of the inspection, the college has firm plans to rectify this situation as a matter of urgency. Staff new to the college, including newly qualified teachers, are very well supported. The induction programme and the support provided by senior staff, as well as that provided within departments, are extremely good and much appreciated by new entrants to the profession. Performance management arrangements provide a model of good practice. The college makes effective use of in-service training. A large number of staff have benefited from courses to improve their skills in ICT. The number and quality of technical support staff are good and the team of learning support assistants provides very good support for pupils with special needs. The secretarial and clerical staff contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the college.
94. Overall, the accommodation is barely adequate. Although the accommodation is wisely used and every effort is made to ensure that the buildings are well kept, there are some significant shortcomings. The buildings look dilapidated and the college's listed building status means that it is difficult to get any repairs or improvements done quickly. Recent additions to the accommodation have improved the learning environment. The media suite in modern foreign languages, for example, is an excellent facility and has a positive impact on standards. The drama studio provides good accommodation for the subject but lacks adequate lighting. The new music block is well designed and provides good practice facilities. Physical education benefits from access to extensive indoor and outdoor facilities, including a swimming pool. The new humanities block is attractive and benefits from an easily accessible computer suite.

However, the two specialist ICT rooms have inadequate ventilation. This is not only a health risk but also causes frequent computer malfunction. The college has to make use of a large number of mobile classrooms. These are generally well maintained and teachers make very good use of display to ensure that they provide a stimulating learning environment. However, the facilities for teaching science in these mobiles are unsatisfactory. Although accommodation for design and technology is good, it is not fully utilised and there is no mains water supply in the food technology room. Lunchtime arrangements are inadequate and large numbers of pupils have to eat their packed meals in the main college thoroughfare.

95. The toilets in the physically disabled unit are unsatisfactory and access to the unit is difficult for pupils because of heavy doors. Access to whole-college areas is generally good, although there is no ramp down to the field, access to the upper floors of the art room causes pupils concern and it is difficult for pupils to get into the sixth form centre. Access to the sixth form block is generally a problem. It is particularly difficult for wheelchair users to gain access as they need help to get in but cannot be seen by students already inside. The unloading area for physically disabled pupils is safe but has no canopy. This means that these pupils are unprotected in wet weather and unloading the mini-buses takes a relatively long time.
96. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. They are good for English, history, and geography. However, several large items of equipment in science are in urgent need of replacement and there is a shortage of artefacts and textbooks for religious education. Although the provision of computers is good overall, a shortage of computers in the art and music departments is preventing full coverage of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The library book stock is generally satisfactory for Years 7 to 11. The librarian is enthusiastic and the use of the library has improved since the last inspection. This is having a positive effect on teaching and learning. Generally, the resources available to the college are helping to improve pupils' learning and the standards achieved. The college has all the necessary curricular resources to facilitate mobility for physically disabled pupils.

## **Sixth form**

### *Leadership and management*

97. Excellent leadership provides a clear direction for the development of the sixth form and is well supported by senior management, governors and staff of the college. On a day-to-day basis, administrative arrangements work well. The sixth form provides a model of international co-operation in the range of students it attracts from the United Kingdom and other countries. The sixth form is a distinct but important part of the college as a whole. Sixth formers are known well individually and benefit from responsibilities they undertake. Many contribute effectively to college productions and performances. They also enjoy the special facilities in the sixth form centre and events organised by their own sixth form council.
98. Students who join the sixth form from other schools or from abroad are quickly assimilated into groups and are provided with very good support. The sixth form aims successfully to develop a culture of high achievement. Students work well together and

provide excellent examples of mutual understanding and respect between people of different national, ethnic and religious groups. They make a significant contribution to the ethos of the college. Overall results are well above average when students' performance in both the IB Diploma and A-level examinations are taken into account. These results represent good achievement when account is taken of the attainment levels of students starting in Year 12.

99. Bearing in mind that expenditure on the sixth form is contained within its income, which is a little below average, the sixth form operates cost-effectively. The head of the sixth form is an assistant warden and a member of the senior management team and it is from this forum that the drive for continuous improvement comes. Students' progress is monitored carefully and appropriate action is taken to provide additional support when this is necessary.

### ***Resources***

100. Staffing arrangements are satisfactory. Whilst overall the number of teachers is in suitable proportion to the number of sixth form students, several small teaching groups have been formed to accommodate student choice. Teachers are suitably qualified for the courses provided; inspection evidence is that teaching in the sixth form is a little better, overall, than lower down the college. Arrangements for monitoring sixth form teaching and learning, as for the college as a whole, are systematic in most subjects but lack consistency in a few, for example, in mathematics. Overall, the sixth form is adequately resourced with learning resources and computers, but many subjects report shortages of library books. There are also shortages of computers for art and music and the recording studio is not fully equipped to meet the requirements of the A-level music technology course due to start in September 2002.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

101. *To raise further the standards of work, attainment and progress of students, the governors, warden, senior management team and staff should:*

#### ***Main College***

- Strengthen the senior management team to ensure greater consistency in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in all subjects. (paragraphs: 34, 38, 52, 71, 74, 86, 87, 100, 133, 159, 162, 177, 186, 227)
- Improve planning and provision for ICT by ensuring that:
  - schemes of work include planning for the teaching of ICT in all subjects;
  - there is effective monitoring to ensure that pupils' ICT skills are developed in all subjects;
  - there is an effective system for assessing pupils' ICT capability across the curriculum.  
(paragraphs: 3, 7, 34, 47-48, 71, 74, 89, 181-183, 185, 187)

- Increase access to computers for teaching and learning in art and music so that National Curriculum requirements are met. (paragraphs: 47, 153, 186, 204)
- Ensure that curricular planning in design and technology enables pupils to build on their learning experiences in a more continuous way. (paragraphs: 3, 47-49, 155-157, 159-160, 162)
- Ensure that the amount of curricular time allocated to religious education in Years 7 to 9 is sufficient to allow full coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. (paragraphs: 3, 47, 224, 228)

***Sixth form***

- Develop and implement a course of study in religious education to meet statutory requirements. (paragraphs: 47, 62, 89)



### ***Physically disabled unit***

- Continue to press the local health authority to provide speech and language therapy as specified in pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs. (paragraphs: 68, 106)
- Continue to press for improvements to the accommodation for the unit to ensure greater ease of access and to improve health and safety. (paragraphs: 95, 111)

*In addition to those areas for improvement, the following weaknesses need attention:*

### ***Main college***

Subject leadership in mathematics (paragraphs: 131-133); teaching and learning in drama (paragraphs: 7, 35, 38, 124-126); aspects of the accommodation (paragraphs: 21, 94, 147, 161); collective worship (paragraphs: 47, 92); parents' meetings (paragraph: 81); the monitoring of teaching and learning in religious education (paragraph: 93); college finances (paragraph: 90).

### ***Sixth form***

The number of library books to support teaching and learning (paragraph: 100).

The college has a good sense of its own strengths and areas of improvement. The majority of the issues identified by the inspectors feature in college strategic planning.

## **THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED UNIT**

102. The college has an effective unit that caters well for up to 21 pupils with physical disabilities, many of which necessitate the use of wheelchairs. Pupils attend lessons in the main college and there is very good provision for pupils to work individually or in small groups within the unit when necessary. This may be to concentrate on specific skills, such as literacy or to follow individual physiotherapy programmes.
103. Pupils make good progress in lessons. They achieve well in relation to the targets set in their Individual Education Plans, with most pupils attaining standards that are consistent with national expectations for their age groups. Although some pupils have associated learning difficulties, many pupils achieve good grades in GCSE or A-level examinations. Pupils' achievement in physical education is particularly good because of very good liaison between teachers and physiotherapists and the sheer effort that pupils put into their work. Achievement in swimming is outstanding: some pupils compete at international level. For example, one student holds a world record for backstroke and has realistic expectations of competing in the next Paralympics. Good achievement in food technology is helped by tables well modified for the use of pupils in wheelchairs.
104. Teaching within the unit is good and sometimes very good. It is brisk and purposeful, and planned well to engage the interest of pupils. In a spelling lesson in Year 7, for example, quick changes of activities helped to maintain pupils' interest, which provided

pupils with good opportunities to work independently and in pairs. Teaching of this quality helps to keep pupils' progress in line with their mainstream peers. Teaching and learning in the IDEAL class are good. This sixth form class caters well for the learning and social needs of students with moderate learning difficulties, some of whom also have physical disabilities. In one lesson, effective use was made of role-play to prepare students to take part in a conference on the plight of refugees. A feature of teaching in the unit is the good humour, which helps to maintain good relationships and a friendly learning atmosphere. The learning of physically disabled pupils and students in lessons is aided considerably by the sensitivity and competence of support assistants, who help pupils participate without stifling their independence. The assistants take notes where necessary, ensure that ICT is available when needed and keep pupils up to date with any lessons missed for medical reasons. There are, however, a few occasions when assistants are deployed when support is not necessary.

105. All pupils and students have access to the full curriculum, including physical education, with the majority of pupils attending all lessons alongside their peers. A very good balance is maintained between meeting academic and physical needs. The timing of necessary physiotherapy or occupational therapy programmes is negotiated well with individuals to minimise disruption to lessons and to give pupils a degree of control. On a few occasions it has not been possible to include pupils with physical disabilities in educational visits. This has generally been due to circumstances beyond the control of the college. Pupils join in extra-curricular activities with their peers and are very appreciative of the after college sports club open to them and to pupils with special needs from neighbouring schools.
106. The college is meticulous in meeting the needs specified on Statements of Educational Needs. However, statutory requirements are not met for reasons beyond the college's control. The local health authority is not providing the college with speech and language therapists nor have programmes of speech therapy been drawn up to be delivered by college staff and monitored by speech and language therapists. This is having an adverse effect on pupils' communication and impedes their social integration.
107. The assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupils' academic and physical progress are very good. All statutory requirements relating to annual reviews and Individual Educational Plans are met. Records are very well maintained and readily accessible. Mainstream staff are kept very well informed about individual pupils and contribute well to review meetings. The very good partnership between home and college and the excellent liaison between the college and medical and paramedical services mean that reviews are efficient and productive. Pupils choose whether to attend all, part or none of the review. They can also contribute to the review in writing. Targets set on pupils' Individual Education Plans are reviewed according to need but some short-term targets lack precision.
108. The attitudes of pupils and students with physical disabilities are excellent. They are very well integrated into the life of the college life and feel valued and well cared for both physically and emotionally. They are very positive about their college experiences and consider that they have made very good progress academically, socially and personally. Although they thoroughly enjoy being part of a mainstream college, they also appreciate the support and understanding of one another and the back up provided by sensitive support staff, teachers and professionals such as therapists.

109. Leadership and management of the unit are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads a strong and united team of teachers and support staff, who liaise very effectively with many outside agencies. All staff display a quiet confidence that they communicate well to the pupils, giving them the security to be as independent and adventurous as possible. Support staff are welcome at college training days.
110. The unit has all the necessary resources to facilitate mobility for individual pupils, with some pupils using tricycles to travel round the extensive site. Some ICT equipment (for example heavy laptops and voice synthesisers) are becoming outdated and are shortly to be replaced. The unit's accommodation is very well planned to allow all pupils to socialise with mainstream peers and the central area is large enough for group physical education lessons. Small rooms radiating from the centre provide space for individual physical programmes and small group work.
111. There are significant deficiencies in the accommodation, however. It is surprising that a purpose built physically disabled unit has difficult access for pupils because of heavy manually operated doors. There are issues of health and safety because of a lack of separate cubicles and the absence of a changing bed in the girls' toilets. Edging around the carpet in the central area provides an obstacle to wheelchairs and floor sockets are a hazard. These deficiencies should be made good as soon as possible. Access to whole-college areas is generally good, although there is no ramp down to the field, access to the upper floors of the art room causes pupils concern and it is difficult for pupils to get into the sixth form centre.

## PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	159
	Sixth form	69
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		76

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	7	33	66	49	4	0	0
Percentage	4	21	42	31	2	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	25	29	13	0	0	0
Percentage	3	36	42	19	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.*

### *Information about the college's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the college's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the college's roll	1094	254
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	68	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	48	14
Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register	358	24

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	118

<b>Pupil mobility in the last college year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	25

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
College data	8.5
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	111	105	216

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	81	94	86
	Girls	93	79	82
	Total	174	173	168
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	81 (74)	80 (77)	78 (65)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	46 (41)	54 (52)	53 (34)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	90	87
	Girls	91	82	77
	Total	174	172	164
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	81 (80)	80 (72)	76 (67)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	42 (41)	51 (39)	45 (33)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	108	98	206

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	63	100	106
	Girls	68	91	97
	Total	131	191	203
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	College	63 (62)	93 (87)	99 (93)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	College	44.9 (41)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	College	100
	National	76

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

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
	2001	18	36	54

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	14.7	13.2	13.7 (12.6)	5	5.2	5.1 (6.7)
National	16.9	17.9	17.4 (18.2)	9.8	11.4	10.6 (2.7)

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

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

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	College	98
	National	81

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	19
Black – African heritage	9
Black – other	10
Indian	15
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	19
White	1213
Any other minority ethnic group	46

### ***Exclusions in the last college year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	21	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	82
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	36
Total aggregate hours worked per week	970

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.2
Key Stage 4	21.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4072682
Total expenditure	4112978
Expenditure per pupil	3051
Balance brought forward from previous year	-19400
Balance carried forward to next year	-59696

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	31
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	44

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1348
Number of questionnaires returned	272

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	4	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	42	8	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	48	16	5	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	56	17	4	1
The teaching is good.	32	58	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	43	21	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	39	7	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	41	7	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	43	26	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	35	53	7	3	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	53	7	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	43	5	3	8



## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH

Overall provision for English is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are well above average and show good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Effective marking shows pupils how they can improve their work.
- The additional English time in Year 7 is being used very effectively to develop pupils' literacy skills.

#### Areas for improvement

- In a few lessons, the pace is so fast that it does not allow pupils to consider, reflect on, and absorb new learning.

112. Attainment overall at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 is well above average. Standards in the 2001 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above average and well above the standards achieved by pupils in similar schools. Girls performed better than boys and the difference between them was similar to that found nationally. These results show a marked improvement on those at the time of the last inspection and reflect the very good achievement that pupils make in Years 7 to 9. The trend is rising at a similar rate to the national trend.
113. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining Grades A\* to C in both English and English Literature was above average. The English results were close to the standards gained by pupils in similar schools. The proportion achieving A\* and A grades in English has increased considerably since the last inspection and in 2001 was well above average. However, the percentage of pupils gaining at least a Grade G in English was below average. A lower proportion of pupils was entered for both examinations than was the case nationally, although a number of the pupils who were not entered were being educated offsite while remaining on the college roll. The recently appointed head of department has responded rapidly to this situation. He has deployed the most senior and experienced teachers to lower-attaining groups in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, the levels of achievement and the attitudes of these pupils have improved dramatically and almost all pupils in the current Year 11 will take both English and English literature examinations in 2002. Those pupils for whom GCSE is not an appropriate course are to be entered for an alternative qualification.
114. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above average. Pupils are achieving very well because of the very good teaching. The vast majority of pupils are articulate and confident speakers, well able to explain their ideas. They take an active part in small group discussions, listening carefully to others and organising their own contributions thoughtfully. In more formal situations pupils are able to respond to the teachers' questions with clear explanations, exploring and supporting

their ideas and questioning when they need clarification. In several lessons higher-attaining pupils were asked to make presentations to the class making use of ICT and an overhead projector to display their notes. These presentations were delivered with confidence and provided good models of clear and expressive speaking for other pupils.

115. Most pupils read with understanding and enjoyment and the department's focus on the different skills needed to become an independent reader has increased pupils' knowledge and improved their skills. In a very good Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils had to reflect on the different ways in which they read and identify evidence to show that they could exercise these varying skills. Teachers' own obvious enjoyment of books and their skill in reading aloud are major factors in the development of pupils' own reading for pleasure. A wide range of good quality texts is used in lessons, including many from or about other cultures and traditions. Whenever this occurs, teachers always show pupils on a world map where the author comes from, thereby increasing pupils' global awareness. Effective use is made of ICT to enhance the presentation of some written work.
116. The department encourages pupils to analyse other writers' skills and this contributes well to pupils' development of their own writing. Lower-attaining pupils write some sustained pieces with reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation. Average-attaining pupils in Year 8 have produced some impressive pieces of writing comparing film versions of 'Frankenstein'. High-attaining pupils use a good range of sentence structures and a vivid and wide vocabulary to engage and entertain their readers. Teachers ensure that pupils write in a range of styles, both formal and informal. Autobiographical writing in Year 7 enables pupils to reflect on their lives, on people who are important to them and, in the case of higher attainers, on the ways in which their language has been influenced.
117. These well above average levels of attainment and achievement are maintained throughout Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11 most pupils are assured speakers, able to debate and put forward a logical argument. They read with an understanding of the implications beneath the surface and are able to recognise the author's intentions. Their writing is mature, thoughtful, analytical and well structured. In one Year 11 lesson, higher and average-attaining pupils were asked to relate Freud's theory of personality to the characters in 'Lord of the Flies'. They were able to grasp sophisticated concepts, discuss and support their ideas, and present them confidently to the class. The excellent teaching led them to think for themselves, to question what others thought, to recognise subjectivity and realise that their opinions are as valid as anyone else's. In another excellent Year 11 lesson, a group of pupils with a range of educational and behavioural needs were enabled, through very focused teaching, to use a range of specialist terminology and analyse media texts with an impressive level of confidence. The teacher skilfully used accessible models of other pupils' writing, and resources that were well matched to individual pupils' needs to promote a sense of achievement and success.
118. Pupils display very positive attitudes towards English. These are generated through the energy and enthusiasm of their teachers and the way in which pupils are being given the skills to assess their own learning. The vast majority of pupils work hard and respond well to work that stretches and challenges them. Their files of work show that many

spend considerable time drafting and rewriting, and taking care and using imagination over the presentation of their work.

119. These very good levels of achievement and positive attitudes are closely related to the very good teaching. In two thirds of the English lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent. These lessons are characterised by a clarity of purpose, with pupils clearly aware of what they are expected to learn and how that learning will be achieved. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and present them with work that is designed to encourage each individual to work at full stretch. There are constant references in lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11 to the way in which high marks and success in tests and examinations can be achieved. In the additional literacy lesson in Year 7 pupils are regrouped so that specific literacy needs can be met more effectively. High-attaining pupils are taught Latin to extend their understanding of language, while pupils who did not reach the expected levels at the end of Year 6 are given an intensive catch-up programme. Pupils who reached expected levels receive an equally rigorous course about language. An excellent lesson in this programme was observed. Two teachers worked together to explain the idea of the omniscient narrator. The lively delivery of this concept and the practical methods employed engaged pupils' attention and led them to reinforce and develop their ability to identify different narrative perspectives. This very good teaching is consolidated by the very high standard of marking that clearly shows pupils how to improve and by the use of homework to prepare for lessons, to reinforce new learning and to encourage independence. In a few lessons, less experienced teachers took pupils through new learning at such a rapid pace that no time was left for reflection or consolidation. This is more problematic in the very large classes in Years 10 and 11 when the numbers of pupils in small classrooms limit the range of teaching methods that can be used.
120. The department is very well led and managed. The recently appointed head of department sets a very good example through his own excellent teaching and commitment to raising attainment and achievement. He has taken an already successful department forward through rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and has a very good understanding of the priorities for development. The procedures by which pupils' attainment is assessed are clear and the department is using assessment data to improve the provision for all pupils, from the highest-attaining to those who have very specific needs. All the issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed successfully. This is a highly competent and energetic department, well placed to effect further improvement.

### *Literacy*

121. Standards of literacy are high. Pupils' reading skills are very good. They understand the texts they meet in lessons, and higher and average-attaining pupils can use the skills of inference and deduction to read below the surface for different levels of meaning. Pupils use books and the Internet for research and most are able to synthesise information from a variety of sources. The reading skills of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are generally good enough to enable them to have access to the full curriculum. Pupils write well. Most understand how to adapt their writing for different purposes and audiences. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are good and even lower-attaining pupils can communicate information, ideas

and opinions clearly. Higher-attaining pupils display a very sophisticated control of a wide range of styles, structuring their writing with skill and using a range of linguistic features to engage their readers.

122. The development of a cross-curricular approach to developing pupils' literacy skills has been very effective and the very good management of this approach ensures that teachers' awareness of its importance is strong. The college's work in this field has been recognised nationally and included in materials that underpin national training in literacy teaching. The English department has been recognised by the local education authority as being particularly successful in building on the work done in primary schools to improve pupils' literacy skills. The librarian is active in developing literacy skills of lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 as a member of the team teaching literacy progress units and in promoting reading for pleasure through various events and strategies. Teachers in most subject areas display an understanding of the importance of emphasising the key vocabulary, reading skills and styles of writing that are needed for success in the subject. Significant contributions are made by a number of departments. For example, science teachers discuss tense and other aspects of writing about science; the drafting and editing of work is used to good effect in geography and in design technology; and pupils in all years are encouraged to use a variety of sources for research in geography. In history the assessment sheets after units of work in Years 7 to 9 include an evaluation of how well pupils have performed in their writing as well as in their history.
123. Because of the college's international nature, there is a higher than average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. All of those in Years 7 to 11 are at an advanced stage of language acquisition or are bilingual and need no additional language support.

## **DRAMA**

124. The standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE examinations over the last three years have been above average. These standards, however, were not reflected in the work observed in lessons and in pupils' notebooks during the inspection. Pupils do not have a secure understanding of what is dramatically effective or significant when they are devising or improvising. Many find it difficult to absorb themselves in the work, or to create and sustain character. Although pupils show that they are enjoying their drama, too many of them equate drama with play and do not make real creative or imaginative effort. Pupils are often inventive and enjoy performing to the class, although they lack focus and demonstrate limited understanding of how to engage an audience's interest. This is largely because teachers do not make their expectations of the quality of work clear enough.
125. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There is an emphasis on teaching the correct terminology and on giving pupils the opportunity to engage in group discussion. This consolidates pupils' good speaking and listening skills and enables them to negotiate roles within the drama. Drama provides good opportunities for all pupils to participate. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, a pupil who uses a wheelchair and two able-bodied pupils worked together to produce an improvisation based on Chaucer's 'Pardoner's Tale', which enabled all

three to demonstrate their particular talents. In lessons that are less successful, teachers allow pupils to dictate the pace of the lesson and the lessons lack purpose and clarity. They set tasks that limit pupils' creativity and keep them rooted in the mundane, familiar world, rather than enabling them to experience enchantment and explore ideas beyond their understanding. Teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to reflect on their work. Opportunities to assess their own and others' work are missed both in lessons and through drama notebooks and so pupils do not develop the skills that would help them to identify how to improve their work.

126. Drama teachers, as part of the expressive arts within the college, contribute well to the range of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils and students. Those with a particular interest in drama and theatre are able to work with the actor and writer in residence and other professional artists and take part in theatre trips and in a range of college productions.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Test and examination results are significantly better than the national average.
- The highest attaining pupils are challenged and extended well.
- Pupils apply their mathematics well when investigating and when solving problems.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils mark time in Year 7 and planning does not build on from the pupils' previous work in primary schools.
- Current management arrangements are not providing a clear direction for the work of the department.
- There is not enough monitoring of the work of the department to identify and share good practice and to improve teaching and learning.

127. National Curriculum test results for Year 9 pupils fell after the last inspection but have subsequently improved since 1999. They were well above both the national average and results in similar schools in 2001. GCSE results have fluctuated. They have improved slightly since the last inspection but fell in 2001 from a high point in the previous year. In spite of this fall, results were still well above the national average. The 2001 results represented satisfactory overall progress for the pupils from their earlier test results in Year 9. One feature of GCSE results is that a substantial proportion of pupils, often double the national average, achieve the highest A\* and A grades. There has been no difference overall between results of boys and girls, although boys have generally achieved more of these highest grades. Inspection evidence shows that attainment at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 is well above average but that there is room for improvement, particularly in the lower part of the college.

128. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is satisfactory in these year groups and pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make sound progress. Teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 and along with learning

is good overall. Most pupils learn new ideas and skills rapidly, gain a good understanding of the subject, achieve well and make good progress. One strong feature of many lessons is the setting by teachers of mathematical problems and investigations to consolidate skills and to deepen the pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils use and apply well the mathematics that they have learned. For example, during the week of the inspection Year 11 pupils were completing an investigation for their GCSE coursework. The investigations were being tackled systematically by all pupils, with the highest attainers generating and solving their own extensions to the basic task. Their work was of a high standard. Pupils also have the opportunity to use ICT to support their learning. Year 7 pupils use 'LOGO' to develop their understanding of the properties of shapes and Year 9 pupils are taught how to use spreadsheets to solve problems. In a very good Year 8 lesson, the teacher also used a computer simulation to show the pupils how the graph of a bath filling and emptying could be generated. Year 10 pupils were also observed using graphical calculators for the first time to investigate curves of trigonometric functions. The most able pupils are extended well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This is partly because top sets are comparatively small but also as a result of some very good teaching that challenges the pupils' mathematical knowledge and thinking. Questioning here is often probing, teaching brisk and expectations high. Sequences of lessons build skills systematically and teachers usually refer to the work in previous lessons to focus minds on new learning. One shortcoming is that teaching and activities are not adapted to meet the range of abilities and aptitudes that exist even in ability sets.

129. Mental arithmetic skills are improving but their development does not consistently receive sufficient attention, a weakness identified at the last inspection. Many, including higher-attaining and older pupils still use their calculators for comparatively straightforward calculations. The adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy is starting to have a beneficial impact in Year 7, but department policy and practice are not consistent. Many lessons, not just in the lower part of the college, start with a brief activity designed to sharpen skills and focus minds on the lesson ahead. For example, Year 10 pupils completed five quick review questions, the answers to which were then discussed, while a lesson in Year 9 began with an exercise to find the lowest common multiple of 10 pairs of numbers before leading on to an investigation to find factors of various numbers. Both of these sessions were very effective and set the class up well for the rest of the lesson. Several parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting commented that their children marked time in Year 7. This concern was borne out to some extent by inspection evidence. Teaching is pitched at too low a level for many pupils, particularly in mixed-ability groups during the first term. As a result, their progress is slower than it should be. This contributed to unsatisfactory teaching in two of the lessons observed in mathematics: one in Year 7 and one in Year 9. The department is in the process of introducing the National Strategy for Numeracy but the newly prepared scheme of work does not provide sufficient guidance for teachers to ensure that they plan lessons that build on rapidly from the standards achieved by pupils in their primary schools. However, satisfactory arrangements are in place to help the pupils who have not reached the expected standard when they entered the college to catch up.
130. Pupils mostly behave well in lessons, because teachers control their classes well and make their lessons interesting. This in turn generates positive attitudes towards the

subject. Pupils mostly try hard, listen to their teachers and want to do well, although the failure by the teacher to deal effectively with the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of pupils in one Year 9 lesson led to a slow pace to their learning. A particular feature of many successful lessons is that teachers often expect the pupils to work in pairs or small groups when undertaking an activity or when discussing a problem. Pupils generally collaborate well and as a result their learning is enhanced. This was seen to good effect in a low ability Year 7 class where the pupils practised writing orders in a restaurant in algebraic form. The pupils worked well on this activity with good support from the teacher and classroom assistant, several becoming quite secure in their understanding of simple formulae.

131. Current arrangements for the management of the department are unsatisfactory and are not providing a clear direction for the development of mathematics and numeracy. Due to difficulties in recruitment the department has been without a permanent head of department for the last two terms. The result has been that good practice is not identified and shared, any shortcomings are not tackled and eliminated, and policies, such as the marking policy, are not being implemented consistently. The difficulties of the department are compounded by the accommodation. The department is spread across the site in temporary classrooms and this militates against the development of strong teamwork and the sharing of good practice. Staffing recruitment difficulties this year, the part-time contracts of several staff and the responsibilities of some in other parts of the college also impede the development of the subject. One consequence of this is that the teaching of several classes is split between two members of staff.
132. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the last inspection but scope remains for standards to rise further. Test and examination results have improved but no faster than the national trend and other shortcomings identified by the last report, such as weaknesses in pupils' mental arithmetic skills, have not been tackled sufficiently robustly. Furthermore, both the scheme of work and the monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress are linked to a much earlier version of the National Curriculum, although an overdue revision is now under way. The current arrangements for the department's management do not place it in a strong position to secure the changes and improvements that are needed to raise standards further.

### *Numeracy*

133. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced into Year 7 but has not had a significant impact as work is not set at a sufficiently high level to move all pupils forward rapidly. The college has recently opened discussions through staff meetings to develop a college policy for numeracy but has not established where and how other subjects support the promotion of numeracy or where pupils need to apply specific skills that they have learnt. Written methods of calculation are very good throughout the college but the mental recall of number facts is slightly weaker, there being too much reliance on the calculator for simple questions. Pupils have a good understanding of the properties of shapes and present and interpret data very well. A strength is the pupils' ability to apply their skills to the solution of problems and to investigations. These are tackled systematically; clear explanations using mathematical language are provided and many pupils generalise and test their solutions carefully. The more able extend their work by setting themselves further challenges to be solved.

## SCIENCE

Overall the quality of provision in science is **good**

### Strengths

- Leadership of the department.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Teachers work well together and are committed to raising standards.
- Very good relationships with pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of marking to give pupils guidance on what they need to do in order to improve the standards of their work.
- Material designed to support the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils.
- Resources and the quality of the accommodation.

134. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, the college's performance in science was well above the national average and better than that in the previous two years. It was also well above the national average in comparison with similar schools. Results were similar to those in mathematics but below those in English. The results of girls were better than those of boys. Good value was added to the performance of the majority of pupils relative to their standards of attainment on entry to the college.
135. In the 2001 GCSE examination in double award science the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C was below the national average. Those pupils entering for the double award examination constituted about three quarters of the cohort; the remainder were entered for separate examinations in biology, physics and chemistry. The proportion obtaining grades A\* to C in these examinations was well above the national average. All candidates obtained grades A\* to C in chemistry. Overall results in GCSE science were above the national average overall and similar to those of the previous two years, when almost all pupils were entered for the double award. They were similar to those in mathematics but below those in English. The performance of girls was better than that of boys in double award science but lower than that of boys in chemistry and physics.
136. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Pupils enter the college with above average levels of attainment and they make good progress during Years 7 to 9. As a result, achievement is good at the end of Year 9. Most pupils have good knowledge and understanding of topics in all four of the attainment targets. Year 7 pupils were observed testing a range of substances with litmus paper competently to see whether they were acidic or alkaline. A small higher-attaining group was extending its knowledge by using pH paper to determine the strength of the acidity or alkalinity. Pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of microbes, genetic variation, respiration and the way in which sound is transmitted.



Work that the department has undertaken in connection with the Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) initiative is evident in much of the work seen.

137. By the end of Year 11 most pupils have a sound understanding of the examination syllabuses. Standards are above national expectations. This is in contrast to the previous year, when many pupils failed to reach the levels predicted by their prior attainment. Pupils presently in Year 11 are achieving well and are working at levels that are generally consistent with and often above those predicted by their attainment at the end of Year 9. They have a good understanding of radio waves and the way in which they are used to transmit information. Pupils also have a good understanding of the significance of the change from analogue to digital signals. A lower-attaining group in Year 11 demonstrated a satisfactory knowledge of photosynthesis, although some had difficulty relating the process to the structure of the leaf.
138. The standards achieved by pupils who are studying for separate examinations in physics, chemistry and biology are well above average. In a Year 10 lesson on heat transfer, for example, pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the relationship between temperature change, density and convection in fluids. In another Year 10 lesson pupils showed that they had a secure understanding of ions and the nature of solutions and were able to plan an experiment to prepare salts by precipitation. In a Year 10 biology lesson pupils extended their work on genetics by engaging in a mature debate on the social and moral implications of genetic research.
139. The achievement of students with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and for some it is good. They make particularly good progress when they receive additional support and teachers frequently adapt their questions and vocabulary to ensure that they are fully included in the lesson. However, in some lessons not enough use is made of resources, such as modified worksheets, that have been specially adapted to meet their needs or of resources designed to challenge and extend higher-attaining pupils.
140. The written work of higher and middle-attaining pupils is usually satisfactory and often good. For many lower attainers the standard of presentation is unsatisfactory. Work is sometimes unfinished, diagrams and tables are produced without a ruler and there is a lack of organisation. In both the upper and lower years pupils' numerical skills are sufficient to allow them full access to the National Curriculum. High-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 use their mathematical skills competently. They can manipulate formulae and use them in handling difficult numerical problems.
141. Pupils make good use of ICT. For example, in a good lesson with lower-attaining pupils in Year 9, data-logging equipment was used effectively to capture information on temperature changes in a model house. These were then transferred to laptop computers. The resulting graphs were discussed and then printed for pupils to have permanent records of the work. Through this activity, pupils improved their understanding of heat transfer as well as extending their skills in ICT. Pupils enjoy their work and have a positive approach. They are supportive of one another and are courteous and well behaved.
142. Teaching in all years is never less than satisfactory and in around three quarters of the lessons observed it was good or very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their

subject. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. These objectives are shared with pupils, usually orally, but are most effective when they are displayed on the board throughout the lesson. This provides pupils with a constant reminder of the purpose of the lesson and they can monitor their own progress towards the target.

143. Relationships are very good and praise is used effectively to reinforce knowledge and raise self-esteem. In the best lessons expectations are high and teachers use a variety of activities to maintain interest and provide constant challenge. For example, in a well-planned Year 11 lesson, pupils learned about the functions of the skin. Following a good introduction they carried out a simple experiment to demonstrate the cooling effect of perspiration. Results were plotted on a graph and pupils observed a similar graph being generated on a laptop computer using temperature probes. Pupils at all levels of attainment were stimulated by the well-structured activities and achievement was good as a result. Higher-attaining pupils in the group were able to relate this work to other work they had done in a physics lesson on latent heat.
144. Pupils enjoy practical work, which they carry out competently and with confidence. They also respond well when they are given the opportunity to take some responsibility for their learning. A Year 9 group had observed a demonstration of the extraction of iron from iron oxide and discussed the displacement of metals. They used their knowledge of the activity series to design and conduct an experiment to find the identity of an unknown metal. Careful planning coupled with high expectations resulted in excellent progress by all pupils.
145. Pupils' work is marked regularly. Teachers make supportive comments but they do not always make clear where errors have been made and what they need to do to improve. The department uses assessment data well to monitor progress and to set targets.
146. The department responded positively to the last report. There is an improvement in the provision of textbooks and investigative science is now firmly embedded in schemes of work. More time has been made available for teaching in Years 10 and 11 and there has been an improvement in the range of teaching skills used.
147. A strength of the department is the way in which staff, under the strong thoughtful leadership of the head of department, work together and are committed to raising attainment. Teaching is well supported by five laboratory technicians. Teachers exhibit a wide range of teaching skills but lack the time to share good practice. The head of department has insufficient time to monitor effectively the quality of teaching. The department's documentation is excellent. Pupils' work is attractively displayed to create a welcoming environment. Several laboratories are in need of redecoration and refurbishment and some are so small and poorly equipped that standards are in danger of being adversely affected. Likewise, the department is approaching a situation where it will be unable to replace some items of equipment owing to a lack of funds.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

Overall, the provision for art is **very good**

#### Strengths

- GCSE examination results have risen since the last inspection and are consistently above average.
- Achievement is very good and pupils' work shows individuality and creativity.
- Well-planned teaching enables pupils to learn very effectively.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of stimulating learning activities.
- The subject is well managed.
- The college environment is enhanced by the display of outstanding art work.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work.
- The use of ICT to fully cover the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.
- The range of library books to support teaching and learning.

148. The 2001 Teacher Assessments show standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 to be well above average overall. These assessments are confirmed by inspection evidence. Pupils enter the college with standards of attainment in art that are broadly average. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is very good, so standards are well above national expectations by the end of Year 9. Some pupils show outstanding drawing skills and sensitivity to colour. There is little difference between the standards attained by boys and girls. GCSE examination results in 2001 continued the steady improvement in the results since the last inspection. The results were well above the national average with almost all candidates gaining A\* to C grades. The performance of girls was better than boys, although the difference was smaller than that observed nationally. Pupils make good progress through Years 10 and 11 and this leads to good achievement. Pupils take pride in their work and produce varied and original work with an understanding of other cultures, artistic movements and the work of individual artists.
149. The cultural diversity of our heritage is cleverly interwoven with pupils' creative work. For example, in Year 7 pupils draw maps of the college in the style of Aboriginal art; these are particularly striking in paint on black backgrounds. In Year 9, large pastel studies of African masks are drawn freely on large sheets and then African textile designs are added to create the background. These are later interpreted in three-dimensional studies. A particularly well thought out project in Year 9 started with careful pencil drawings of everyday mechanical objects. The drawings were adapted to become robots and designs from Leger pictures were added to make the background. In the lesson observed these were being painted in the colour schemes that Leger would have favoured but with tonal work on the robots.
150. The quality of the teaching was satisfactory in all of the lessons observed. In Years 7 to 9 in the majority of lessons it was good and in Years 10 and 11 it was very good. Effective classroom management ensures that lessons are quiet and orderly. Good planning ensures that activities and linked resources hold pupils' interest. Pupils' work is carefully monitored and the effective use of assessment enables teachers to give pupils support when it is most needed. Teachers use praise and encouragement effectively to sustain pupils' concentration. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to talk about and evaluate their own work and the work of others. More use of questions and answers would help to reinforce learning.

151. All the pupils show positive attitudes and strive to do their best. Very few pupils in Years 7 to 9 lose concentration, even in the 100-minute double lessons, and most pupils' behaviour is exemplary. All classes in Years 10 and 11 show enthusiasm and have a strong work ethic. Their sketchbooks are assembled with pride and show how, through experimentation, their ideas have developed. They work quietly, with consideration for their environment and others. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils accept that considerable work must be done outside lesson time if they are to achieve their best. Many pupils take advantage of the opportunities offered by teachers to work beyond normal college hours. Most pupils have equipped themselves with good quality materials to use at home.
152. This is a cheerful and stable department, inspirationally led. All procedures necessary for the department to function effectively are in place. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly. Effective use is made of assessment information to analyse performance and targets are set for pupils and teachers. Schemes of work are carefully planned to fit the National Curriculum strands while giving individual teachers room to express their own enthusiasms and creativity. The head of department provides an excellent role model through her own teaching and classroom management and shares her expertise freely with her colleagues.
153. There are four well-qualified art specialists working in four purpose-built rooms, one of which has a dark room. The rooms are located close to each other, are well equipped and of a suitable size, with specialist facilities for ceramics, textiles, photography, graphics, printing and fine art. Currently, the department does not have the facilities necessary to include ICT as an integral part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. This impedes the teaching of the full National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Pupils' interest in and knowledge of the subject are enhanced by a variety of educational visits - for example, to museums and galleries as well as to Brancaster Beach and Kettles Yard. Pupils are challenged by work with the Cambridge Sculpture Partnership and with artists in residence. The department makes excellent use of the modest amount of technician support time available to it. All staff undertake a variety of training activities to keep abreast of new initiatives and to broaden their own knowledge.
154. The influence of the department can be felt throughout the college with excellent displays that engage attention. Despite being a busy and crowded place, these displays are respected and cared for by the pupils, a measure of the esteem in which the department is held.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision for design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- GCSE results have been consistently above the national average.
- Computer-aided design is taught well.
- The standard of practical work is high.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' full curricular entitlement to design and technology in Years 7 to 9.
- The range of design and technology subjects offered in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of assessment.

155. In 2001, Teachers' Assessments of Year 9 pupils' work showed that attainment was close to average. This has been the case for the last four years. The work seen during the inspection supports this judgement. However, the number of pupils obtaining above average standards is relatively low. This is because the higher attaining pupils in Year 9 do not have the opportunity to study design and technology. Pupils who do study the subject achieve well, considering the fragmented nature of the curriculum offered by the college. Opportunities to systematically acquire and develop appropriate skills and knowledge in the different areas of the subject are limited because of the structure of the timetable. Despite this, pupils try hard and take a pride in their work. They quickly learn to use the design process and present their work well. They develop the ability to design for specific purposes and can draw a range of initial ideas before selecting the best one. Pupils learn to use a good range of tools and equipment safely and with an appropriate level of precision. They are now developing good skills in graphics and can produce orthographic, isometric and one- and two-point perspective drawings of a good standard. Pupils are making good use of ICT in all aspects of the subject. The progress being made in computer-aided designing is particularly good. Evaluation skills are at a basic level and the department is keen to improve them. Pupils demonstrate secure research skills and develop an understanding of relevant industrial processes.
156. GCSE results in design and technology subjects were above the national average in 2001. In food technology, they were well above. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection, although they were lower last year than in the previous two years. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are likely to achieve standards close to the national average, rather than above it. However, pupils have the opportunity to attend extra classes during lunchtimes, after college and on Saturday mornings. Those who do so are improving the quality of their coursework at a good rate. The quality of pupils' practical work is generally good. In a Year 11 resistant materials lesson, for example, pupils demonstrated above average skills in making some well-designed pieces of furniture. Their accompanying design folders were of an appropriate standard and most showed careful presentation. Regular homework is ensuring that they build up a good revision document and this should help them prepare for final examination. All pupils make good use of ICT to improve the presentation of their work and access the Internet for research. The area of pupils' work that is in need of most improvement is their written evaluations. The department has recognised this and is beginning to give pupils more structured guidance to enable them to improve. Although work is marked

regularly, it generally lacks sufficient guidance as to how pupils can improve. Consequently, some pupils do not know what they have to do in order to gain more marks.

157. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language receive extra teacher or learning assistant support in lessons. This ensures they are able to tackle the work and feel fully included. However, the department is aware that there are occasions when lower attaining pupils would benefit from more structured worksheets or a different teaching approach.
158. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are positive. They enjoy the activities planned, particularly when they are of a practical nature. Pupils generally behave well in lessons. Most complete their written work and it is neatly presented. Pupils are particularly supportive of each other. They are quick to offer help and advice to their friends. Pupils are quick to take the opportunity to use computers in their work. They show good levels of independence and initiative, particularly those who compete in challenging national competitions. Occasionally, pupils become too noisy and forget to follow health and safety procedures. This is generally because they are enjoying their work, rather than because they are being deliberately unco-operative.
159. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In almost all of the lessons observed, the teaching was satisfactory; in half the lessons it was good or very good. Teachers generally have good relationships with pupils and, as a result, they are keen to please and work hard. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This enables them to provide competent demonstrations and explanations of new skills and techniques and to respond confidently to unexpected problems. As a result, pupils produce well-finished practical work. A range of appropriate teaching strategies is used and, consequently, pupils enjoy the lessons. The introduction of computer-aided design on a regular basis by teachers new to the department has really captured the pupils' interest and enthusiasm and is causing them to make exceptionally good progress in this aspect of their work. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly but there is a lack of consistency in the information pupils are given about how well they are doing or how they could improve.
160. Although the teachers in the department are committed and hard-working, the effectiveness of the department is impeded by the college's curriculum plan for design and technology. The highest attaining pupils in the college do not have the chance to study design and technology in Year 9. Consequently, teachers are unable to achieve the highest levels normally achieved by pupils of this age. In addition, because pupils are only taught each aspect of the subject once over a two-year period, it is difficult to develop their knowledge and skills in a systematic and continuous way. When pupils need to choose from the narrow range of options available to them in Years 10 and 11, they have widely different experiences and capabilities. This makes it much harder for teachers to achieve high standards. They also have to work particularly hard to maintain the interest of pupils who know they will not have the opportunity to study their chosen subject beyond Year 9. The department is doing particularly well in the face of these difficulties.
161. The recently appointed head of department is managing the department effectively. He has a clear and realistic view of its strengths and areas for improvement. He is currently producing an action plan to tackle the issues identified above and has the full support of

his department. He has worked hard to bring together a previously disparate department and is well on the way to achieving this. The implementation of revised schemes of work has increased pupils' interest in the subject. Accommodation and resources are generally good. However, the food technology room is still not supplied with a mains water supply and the machinery that will allow computer-aided making has yet to become fully operational. Two competent technicians ensure that the department is well maintained.

162. Although overall standards have risen, not enough progress has been made in the subject since the last inspection. The curriculum experienced by a third of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is no longer broad and balanced and the curriculum offered in Years 10 and 11 is narrower and does not meet the needs of a large number of pupils. However, there is now a strong sense of teamwork in the department and roles and responsibilities are much more clearly defined.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Pupils' achievement in the GCSE examination.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Fieldwork and coursework.
- Subject leadership and capacity to improve further.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' knowledge of the progress they are making in Years 7 to 9.

163. Standards at the end of Year 9 are consistent with the national average and at the end of Year 11 they are above average.

164. The 2001 Teachers' Assessments show that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 was well above average. However, inspection evidence shows that standards in the current Year 9 are consistent with national expectations rather than above. Pupils' attainment in geography on entry to the college is generally below the average. The overall standard of attainment on entry of the present Year 9 was below that of previous years. To have attained standards that are consistent with expectations, therefore, represents good achievement in the subject. From work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 and 8 are above those in Year 9 and it seems likely that standards in future years will again rise to be above average.

165. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national average and this applies to both boys and girls. After very good results in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in 2001 was again above average and better than the predicted performance based on attainment at the end of Year 9. This above average level of performance has been maintained over the last six years. Pupils are achieving very well even though the pupils choosing the option at the end of Year 9 are drawn mainly from the middle and lower attainment range. Because of this the GCSE examination results in 2001 showed

a shortage of the highest grades and a big bulge at the C grade level. As a result, although the percentage of A\* to C grades was above average, the pupils' point scores were average. For the last four years all pupils entered for the geography GCSE examination have gained grades in the A\* to G range. This success rate is above the national average. Pupils taking geography are doing slightly better than in most subjects they take. Recruitment into the current Year 10 has been better, with more pupils choosing to study geography. Girls do better than boys in tests and examinations. The department has identified boys' underperformance in coursework as a major reason for this and is implementing strategies to overcome the problem

166. In Years 7 to 9 pupils have secure basic mapping and number skills. They can measure and use coordinates, locate places with latitude and longitude and they can construct and interpret graphs of various types. In one Year 7 lesson pupils demonstrated their ability to use calculators when calculating rainfall and temperature averages in work on Italy. Books of all pupils show a good volume of work across all years. A variety of written styles is demonstrated, including notes, extended essays and imaginative pieces. In Years 8 and 9 a combination of good writing and enquiry techniques leads to very good comparisons of how two Brazilian families live and the discussion of positive and negative factors in oil drilling in the Arctic. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils demonstrated good note-taking skills when observing a video on global warming. Pupils in all years, encouraged by teachers, attempt to use the correct technical vocabulary in written and verbal responses. Over time, pupils build a good understanding of the work they are doing. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the causes of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Year 11 pupils demonstrated the systematic application of information in an extended essay on the reasons for Brazil's population density. In Years 10 and 11 pupils use geographical models and advanced graphing techniques in their studies of rivers and population.
167. Very good use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Year 9 pupils, for example, use word processing skills to produce 'newspaper' articles on volcanic activity and pupils in Years 10 and 11 display good keyboard skills and good use of the Internet to investigate sources of renewable energy in the UK. The use of ICT now needs to be extended to include spreadsheets and databases. Pupils with special educational needs make good use of prepared materials, including writing frames, and the available support to make good progress.
168. Pupils have positive attitudes to their lessons, with only a few not being fully motivated and engaged in the learning activities. Pupils show great commitment and interest at all levels. They think for themselves and work well independently and in collaborative groups. This was seen to advantage in a Year 10 lesson in which pupils searched the Internet for information on hurricanes. They show great confidence in their knowledge, which allows them to make well-informed judgements and decisions.
169. Teaching and learning were good or very good in most lessons and never less than satisfactory. Teachers' planning is thorough and results in a strong challenge to pupils. The teachers have high expectations of both learning and behaviour. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and use personal experience to supplement learning. Learning is reinforced by the effective use of questioning and audio-visual aids. Opportunities to engage in fieldwork, carried out in the local area and in visits abroad,



also help to underpin learning. Lessons are characterised by teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and good humour, which create a pleasant learning environment. Management of pupils and relationships are strengths in lessons.

170. Leadership and management of the department are strong. The strong and experienced team has the capacity to maintain the good progress made since the last inspection. Teaching techniques have improved and lessons are better organised and planned. The use of assessment to guide planning has improved, as has the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, more information could be given to pupils through the marking of their work on the progress they are making in Years 7 to 9.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Attainment is significantly above the national average at GCSE.
- Very good teaching.
- The positive attitudes of pupils.
- The rich programme of historical activities and visits to support the curriculum.

### Areas for Improvement

- The implementation of the marking policy.

171. The 2001 Teachers' Assessments show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be broadly average. Inspection evidence shows the attainment of the pupils presently in Year 9 to be above expectations. Pupils generally have a satisfactory, and some a very good, knowledge and understanding of historical events and people in the periods they are studying. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written, pictorial and audio resources to answer historical questions. Pupils are well aware that history is based on evidence, and they have an understanding of the meaning of bias. The majority of pupils have good oral and listening skills, and many have good writing skills. At the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils are capable of writing fluently and incorporating an analytical dimension in their answers. Their work is frequently well presented. Understanding of cause, change and interpretations is very good amongst higher attaining pupils. Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of historical terms, which they use appropriately.

172. Over the past three years, GCSE examination results in history have been on an upward trend. In 2001 the results were significantly above the national average and, in terms of relative performance indicators, were the very best in the college. The percentage of the entry gaining the highest grade of A\* was over double the national percentage. There was an insignificant difference between the results of boys and girls. Both performed significantly above the respective national averages. The results represented good achievement from the standards these pupils attained at the end of Year 9.

173. Inspection evidence shows attainment at the end of Year 11 to be well above expectations. Pupils' historical knowledge and understanding have increased

considerably from the end of Year 9. Higher-attaining pupils produce reasoned and well-substantiated explanations and use relevant arguments to support their conclusions. They have good recall and can identify significant events, long-term causes and consequences. The ability of all pupils to analyse historical evidence is satisfactory. Lower-attaining pupils, in spite of weaker writing skills, use sources to support their narrative and can draw simple conclusions.

174. Pupils make good progress in history through well-focused teaching of basic skills. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as their peers because of well-structured support, the quality of teaching and the provision of materials that are appropriate for all pupils. The department works in close co-operation with learning support staff.
175. History is a popular subject with pupils and many show their interest by choosing to continue to study the subject in Years 10 and 11. Boys and girls generally behave well in lessons and get on with their work willingly. Most pupils sustain their concentration, listen attentively and, when asked, participate fully in discussions. The majority of pupils work well in small group situations. By the end of Year 9, many pupils have become independent learners and are capable of using higher order thinking skills, enquiry and investigation. In class discussions, higher-attaining pupils were observed to be searching for alternative and deeper meanings. For example, in a Year 11 lesson one boy sought clarification as to whether certain practices incorporated in the 'Final Solution' were adopted in deliberate defiance of Jewish mores. Pupils in all age groups achieve well in terms of their capabilities. Pupils make good progress in terms of prior achievement.
176. The quality of teaching observed was never less than satisfactory and frequently very good. Careful lesson preparation and planning led to well-focused tasks for pupils. A sound level of subject knowledge, delivered at a lively pace and supported by a range of source material, promoted positive pupil interest and a purposeful learning environment. High expectations and clear learning objectives are closely linked to examination requirements and shared with pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to see value in the process of learning as well as in the outcome, and to evaluate their own progress. Lessons are characterised by good relationships based on mutual respect between pupils and between pupils and teachers. There is a shared perception of the values and ethos of the college, which underpins the good quality of classroom control. Varied and interesting resources are used to stimulate and enhance learning, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where a short, compelling video clip on the Auschwitz concentration camp was followed by the audio testimony of a survivor of the Holocaust. Pupils are appropriately challenged in class and skilful questioning on the part of teachers encourages them to think critically. Pupils' records and Individual Educational Plans are used to guide the planning of lessons. Teachers work hard and demonstrate a commitment to raise standards and maximise the potential of their pupils. They have a good knowledge of the individual requirements of their pupils.
177. Assessment procedures are good but assessment practices are sometimes inconsistent. Opportunities are lost to enhance pupils' attainment, as marking, though constructive in tone can be shallow in content. Grammatical and spelling mistakes are infrequently

corrected. Pupils respond well to a culture of positive praise and rewards. Attitudes to homework are generally good.

178. Since January 2002 an acting head of department has been managing the department. Nevertheless, plans are already under way to systemise procedures and build on current good practice. There is scope for a closer team approach in order to share good practice, especially with less experienced teachers. Developments are under way to improve record keeping and the tracking of pupils' progress. Schemes of work reflect National Curriculum targets. A departmental improvement plan demonstrates that the department has clear objectives and realisable aims.
179. The accommodation is good. Classroom displays are used effectively to celebrate pupils' achievement and provide a stimulating learning environment. This contributes to the standards being achieved, as does the outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities, which in 2002 includes excursions to historical sites in France for Year 9, and to Holland and Germany for Year 10.
180. There has been a significant improvement in the provision and use of ICT since the last inspection. Computers are used frequently in the teaching of history. The department intends to capitalise upon the rich opportunities that exist to apply pupils' increasingly sophisticated ICT skills in history lessons. An evolving humanities web site has been designed to enhance the history curriculum and to contribute to the development of literacy skills. Pupils are able to access model essays and writing frames to support homework assignments and coursework. The web site is also used to strengthen links with parents and the college community. The department makes a significant contribution to the cultural, social, moral, literacy and numeracy development of pupils. It also plays a significant role in reinforcing the importance of citizenship and international understanding.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in the ICT department is **satisfactory**, but the cross-curricular provision of ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The use of the Internet to support teaching and learning.
- Good provision for pupils with special education needs.
- Extra-curricular provision.

### Areas for improvement

- The cross-curricular scheme of work for Years 7 to 11.
- The assessment of the ICT capability of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take an ICT-based course.
- Reports to parents.
- The number and training of ICT support staff.

181. The 2001 Teachers' Assessments showed attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above the national average. However, evidence from the inspection indicates that these

assessments are inaccurate and overestimated what pupils achieved. The first GCSE examination entries will be in 2002.

182. In work seen during the inspection standards of attainment were below national expectations. This is a result of pupils not following the National Curriculum Programme of Study for ICT. The limited amount of time available for ICT in the design and technology rotation, coupled with some pupils not having any ICT lessons until Year 8 and none in Year 9, limits the standards that pupils can achieve. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 use word processing and desktop publishing programs for their work. This is particularly evident in modern foreign languages and humanities. In geography, spreadsheets are used to produce graphs of climate data and in French, Year 9 pupils are skilled at accessing information from the Internet. In library lessons in Year 7, pupils use the 'Book Byte' program to provide a structure for writing book reviews. As a result of the ICT course in Years 7 and 8, pupils also have basic competences in using and creating spreadsheets and databases. However, pupils do not have access to the full range of activities, such as Web authoring software, needed to fulfil the ICT Programme of Study. As a result of not following the full National Curriculum Programme of Study pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall at the end of Year 9.
183. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in the GNVQ ICT course are satisfactory. Year 10 pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of formulae and functions when creating spreadsheets and are competent in authoring and designing Web pages. Year 11 pupils understand the importance of structuring multimedia presentations through storyboards when using presentation software such as Power Point. Year 10 and 11 pupils use word processing and desktop publishing in French and history for coursework and create spreadsheets to record traffic flow in geography. Spreadsheets are regularly used in mathematics, science and design and technology. Data logging is covered in science and computer-aided design has recently been introduced for those pupils studying design and technology. However, for other pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take the GNVQ course there is no assessment of their ICT capability and no curriculum map to ensure that they have adequate experience across the curriculum and that requirements are met. This prevents pupils from confidently and effectively using a wide range of applications, such as bitmap/vector graphics programs and web authoring software, making multimedia presentations or controlling external devices. There are no opportunities to design ICT systems to suit particular needs. As a result, achievement is unsatisfactory overall.
184. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and behaviour is good in all lessons. Pupils work well individually and, when required, in groups. They show enthusiasm for their work, remain on task throughout lessons, and are well motivated. Relationships between pupils are good, with a willingness to help each other with queries about ICT skills. There is good support for pupils with special education needs.
185. Teaching in ICT lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which helps the flow of lessons. They ask questions in a way that gives pupils scope to think creatively about their work and provide appropriate assistance when pupils encounter problems. Learning targets are related well to the National Curriculum and teachers make them clear to pupils. Teachers provide clear explanations of learning targets and the techniques that have to be used in order for the

targets to be achieved. As a result, pupils are very clear about what they have to do and why. Work is often introduced in an enthusiastic and energetic way, which is effective in encouraging a similar response from pupils. Teachers show good classroom management skills. They are firm but respectful to their pupils. Regular checks are made on individual pupils' progress in lessons and pupils receive good support and guidance. Learning is satisfactory or better on the GNVQ ICT course in Years 10 and 11. However, on the wider basis of inspection evidence, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, owing to the National Curriculum Programme of Study not being fully covered. As a result, pupils are unable to reach or surpass national levels of attainment by the end of Year 9. The ICT course in Years 7 to 9 does not take enough account of pupils' learning in the primary schools and concentrates only on introductory word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheet and database exercises at a low level. Pupils have few opportunities to develop their ICT capability and carry out a range of increasingly complex tasks. College reports do not include reports on pupils' progress in ICT.

186. The newly appointed ICT co-ordinator is committed to improvement and recognises the deficiencies in organisation, planning and assessment. There is a shortage of ICT resources for both art and music and no strategic plan for the use of ICT across the college. This has resulted in a network that has a variety of hardware and operating systems and the purchase of hardware, for example in design and technology, that is not networked. This hinders pupils' access to their digital work and creates extra burdens of computer security and maintenance. There is no monitoring of workstation or software use. There is no appropriate recording of hardware and software assets. Monitoring of the use of ICT rooms is also unsatisfactory. Inspection evidence indicates that one ICT room in particular is not fully utilised by departments. Ventilation in the server room for the network is inadequate. This has resulted in hardware failure and additional costs to the college. The network manager acts as a support technician in addition to his network responsibilities and consideration needs to be given to the numbers, deployment and training of support staff to meet fully the needs of a college-wide network.
187. Nevertheless, the college has made satisfactory improvement in ICT since the last inspection. The previous inspection highlighted the need for improved access to ICT facilities. This has occurred through over 170 workstations being linked to a network with broadband Internet connection now in place. There are good ICT facilities in the library and very good facilities for modern foreign languages, humanities and science. The co-ordination of ICT has also been improved. Standards at the end of Year 9, however, remain below national expectations.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall provision for modern foreign languages is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment.
- Language college status and the investment of teaching time in the primary schools.
- Teaching.
- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Monitoring and assessment procedures.
- Staffing and resources, including the amount of curriculum time.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' routine use of the foreign language in lessons.
- The range and use of readers for personal interest.

188. At the end of Year 9, Teachers' Assessments show levels of attainment in French to be well above the national expectation, including the number of pupils achieving higher levels. There is an improving trend, which accelerated considerably in 2001. Girls do better than boys but by less than the national difference because of a significant improvement in the performance of boys. Higher-attaining pupils make very good progress in French, and a substantial number are being entered for GCSE at the end of Year 9, with a view to completing AS-level in Year 11. This rate of progress owes much to the investment of teaching time, and its quality, in Years 7 to 9 and in the five primary schools from which most pupils are drawn. Evidence from lessons and other work seen confirms that attainment is well above average, overall. There is a greater difference than usual between higher and lower-attaining pupils, because the standards achieved by the most able are so high. Progress is very good, overall, and especially for higher and average-attaining pupils, in both French and German. Most pupils in lower attaining groups make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are included in appropriate teaching groups and make the same progress as their classmates. Pupils for whom English is an additional language cope well with language study and often prove to be among the most able.

189. Pupils build rapidly on prior attainment in Years 7 to 9. They acquire knowledge of vocabulary and language structures as they cover prescribed topics. Pupils in fast track groups in French use quite complex structures, which they apply with confidence and accuracy. Their comprehension skills are very well developed, as they recall vocabulary with ease. All pupils participate well in oral routines in both French and German. Whereas the most able move on quickly to exchanging information and to extended conversational language, lower attainers need much more support and produce only brief responses. Their writing is less accurate, and limited in scope. They manage descriptive paragraphs on familiar topics, whereas higher and average attainers write accounts, letters and descriptions, containing a range of tenses and opinions. All pupils begin to learn German in Year 8, so that the range of attainment is narrower, but still above the national expectation, overall. Pupils who study Latin in Year 7 achieve good

standards and some are encouraged to continue in subsequent years in extra-curricular classes.

190. At the end of Year 11, GCSE examination results at grades A\* to C in French improved in 2001, and are above the national average, continuing a steady trend of improvement over the last three years. Girls did better than boys, but less than nationally. Boys' results were well above the national average for boys, and girls' results were above their national average. These results represented good progress from levels achieved by these pupils at the end of Year 9. In German, a small entry gained results that were well above average, also showing an improving trend. Girls did better than boys by more than the difference nationally, and both exceeded their national average by a considerable margin. In Spanish, where results have fluctuated with the nature of provision and the ability of the year group, results were slightly above the national average. Girls did better than boys. Both were close to their national averages. Results gained at grades A\* and A, taken across the three languages, were a little above the national average, indicating good progress and achievement by gifted pupils. Some such pupils were entered early and achieved high grades. In all three languages, every pupil gained a grade across the full range, A\* to G, indicating at least satisfactory and sometimes better achievement by pupils with special educational needs. Compared to their performance in other subjects, pupils did as well but not better. Inspection evidence, including GCSE estimates and marked coursework, shows that standards are continuing to improve, again reflecting the impact of changes since the awarding of language college status three years ago. A small number of pupils gained very high grades in their home languages, for example Japanese, Russian and Polish.
191. Inspection evidence confirms that levels of attainment are above average and progress is good in Years 10 and 11, in all three languages. Higher and average-attaining pupils continue to acquire and apply new language at a good rate. Increasing familiarity with a range of tenses and structures leads to good or very good understanding of what they read and hear in increasingly long extracts in the foreign language. They speak with good pronunciation and the most able extend their oral work from structured patterns into much freer conversational language. Even where pupils are less fluent, they manage to convey acceptable content. Written coursework is improving standards in French and German. Higher and average-attaining pupils use a variety of registers, tenses and constructions as they write accounts of past holidays and their work experience, describe their local area, and relate the life of a famous person. A Year 11 French group was working on a film review, using a good range of complex language. The open-ended nature of such tasks allows the most able linguists to display their knowledge fully. In German they cope well with unusual language rules involving capital letters and word order. Lower attainers, including the majority of those with special educational needs, also work to acceptable standards in comprehension work, with more support and repetition. They are less confident orally, and some are reluctant to participate, so that speaking is, for them, the least developed skill. Their written work is well supported by writing frames so that content is good, even though poor accuracy hampers communication. In Spanish, where coursework is impractical because it is an option starting in Year 10, the most able pupils make good progress towards a final written examination. A small number of lower-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in a modified course leading to a certificate of achievement. Some very good oral exchanges were observed in a Year 11 Japanese lesson.

192. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. There is a substantial proportion of very good and even excellent teaching to Years 7 to 9 in French. Teaching is uniformly good in Year 11 in all four languages. There is no unsatisfactory teaching, which represents an improvement since the previous inspection for the thirteen teachers observed. Teachers have unusually good command of the languages they teach. Many are native speakers. They make very good use of the foreign language to conduct lessons, providing a strong model and constantly challenging pupils to understand. This has considerable impact on their learning. Teachers also have good knowledge of National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria, which helps them to push pupils to higher standards. The subject's contribution to the teaching of basic skills is good. There is little work on numeracy but ICT skills are well used and extended through regular practice in the department's own computer room, the media suite. There is significant development of literacy skills through focus on language rules and patterns, on scanning for key words to deduce meaning, and on the use of writing frames. Planning for individual lessons is very good. Teachers ensure that there is regular variation in the tasks they provide. This stimulates interest and sustains concentration, and there is good pace to learning. A Year 7 French group played 'Battleships' to practise questions and answers on sport. They learned new language to express frequency of participation, which was then tested through listening and reading tasks. They learned and applied new language and enjoyed the experience. In an excellent French lesson for lower attaining pupils in Year 9, the facilities of the media suite were used effectively as they enjoyed a Powerpoint presentation on clothes, practised the language orally, then used computers to word-process their own presentations, which were displayed on the interactive whiteboard. They made unusually good progress in learning and confidence in this lesson. Planning for sequences of lessons is also very good. A particular strength is the liaison with learning support assistants, which enables them to make a much-appreciated contribution in lessons. The weakness in planning is that there is a lack of insistence on pupils using the foreign language in routine situations, so that too many pupils use English instead of practising the foreign language. Teachers do not make use of the phrases they display on walls to improve this aspect of learning.
193. Teaching methods are good, and effective in promoting learning. They are based on high expectations, so that nearly all work is challenging, engages pupils, and makes them think. Objectives are shared at the start of lessons and there is sometimes a recap at the end, which helps pupils to be aware of their progress, though this is done inconsistently. Pupils use a separate notebook for grammar and useful phrases, which supports their learning by providing a point of reference. The pace and range of activities mean that teachers manage pupils through their involvement in the work, and very little untoward behaviour occurs. Pupils' attitudes are nearly always positive, because they like languages and know they are doing well. In the few lower-attaining groups where attitudes are more negative and behaviour sometimes immature, teachers show sensitivity and persistence in managing pupils, so that progress is still achieved. Work is well matched to ability, with teachers supplying extra work to fast finishers. This supports the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers target questions well so that all pupils are involved, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnic background. There is a weakness in the failure to insist on pupils repeating corrections of pronunciation, so that errors persist.



194. Teachers use time and resources very well. Support staff, including foreign language assistants, learning support assistants and an ICT technician, are well deployed. Teachers make imaginative use of overhead projectors and authentic foreign language materials. The media suite provides particularly good visual support for learning, as well as Internet access to improve independent learning and provide challenging reading material. There is a full timetable for its use, and pupils enjoy the lessons in it. The use of readers for personal interest is not integrated into schemes of work, so that good resources in the library do not have sufficient impact. Some worksheets, and writing for overhead projection, are difficult to read, posing problems for many pupils. Marking is good. Helpful comments enable pupils to understand errors and provide reference for future learning. Teachers set homework regularly. It supplements work in lessons and often provides able pupils with opportunities to extend their knowledge and the scope of their writing.
195. The department is very well led and managed, not just by the Director of Language College, but also by the three teachers with responsibilities for individual languages. They work cohesively and their efforts have brought about very good improvement since the previous inspection, and especially since the award of language college status in 1999. They have raised attainment substantially and managed a very large department, eliminating unsatisfactory teaching. This is the result of good monitoring and assessment procedures, which enable them to plan effectively for improvement. Good examples are the fast tracking of the most gifted pupils, the attention to individual needs, and the raising of boys' attainment. Heads of subject are currently producing schemes of work to integrate recent changes to provision introduced by the Director of Language College, who has an exceptionally clear vision for the future of the subject. The department benefits from very good staffing and resources and from generous teaching time, which have a positive impact on learning. The social and cultural development of many pupils is supported by their involvement in the many trips, exchanges and homestays that the department provides in France, Germany, Spain and with Japanese families in the United Kingdom. Accommodation is good, though there is limited space for display.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Teaching is good or better.
- Very effective monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Regular performing opportunities both inside and outside the college.
- Regular opportunities to work with professional musicians.

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 and short single lessons.
- Not enough computers in the department.
- A lack of multicultural instruments in the department.
- Not enough pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments.

196. The 2001 Teachers' Assessments show that by end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of students matches national expectations at Level 5 and above, but the number of pupils achieving Level 6 and above is below the national average. This is due to a lack of resources to meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum, and not enough teaching time in Years 7 to 9. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the percentage of pupils obtaining A\* to C grades was above the national average. These results were better than those obtained by pupils in the other subjects taken. Many pupils achieved higher grades than those predicted by the results they obtained at the end of Year 9. The results for 2001 were better than those achieved in 2000 but similar to those gained in 1999. In 2001 boys performed better than girls.
197. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 to be broadly consistent with Teachers' Assessments. No significant differences were observed between the standards achieved by boys and girls. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is based on practical work, with the intention of enabling pupils of all musical abilities to join in enjoyable musical activities and achieve a reasonable standard. Pupils in Year 7 write their first compositions based on one of a variety of stimuli. These pieces are then performed to the remainder of the class and followed by a written evaluation of the piece. This includes a description of the performers' experiences during the composition and performance. The pupils then develop their keyboard skills by learning to play 'Pentatonic March' and experience improvising on the theme. Many pupils were observed confidently playing the melody with the right hand while playing a two-note ostinato with the left hand. They listen to music from Java, Africa, and India and discover through listening and playing how the music is built up from recurring rhythmic or note patterns. They then use these techniques as a basis for their own compositions.
198. In September 2001 pupils in Year 8 entered a competition initiated by Amnesty International as part of their course work. They each composed a piece of music in response to Amnesty's campaign against the torture of prisoners around the world. Several of the compositions were chosen to represent the college and these were selected for performance at the national finals in London. Year 8 pupils continue their keyboard studies by learning to play the 'twelve bar blues', adding a more elaborate left hand part to their performances and improvising a melody to fit the chord pattern. They listen to and perform African percussion compositions, discover how composers make use of repeated patterns in their compositions, and learn elementary computer procedures with music software. Pupils in Year 9 plan, write, and perform a short musical, and explore and compose serial music. Compositions by this year group were found to be consistent with expectations for the end of Year 9 and showed confidence in composing in a popular style. They listen to and compose in the style of reggae, participate in a research project involving use of the Internet and compose and perform in a jazz or rock style. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good.
199. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above national expectations. This is largely due to the quality of the teaching but also due to the numerous opportunities the college offers for pupils to work alongside professional composers and performers. Pupils in Year 10 listen to and analyse the characteristics of music from the different historical periods and then attempt to answer GCSE-style listening questions which require candidates to identify the period in which various musical extracts were written and give reasons for

their choice. Early attempts at this task observed in lessons were promising, with a large number of the pupils correctly identifying the period of composition and giving accurate reasons for their choice. In another lesson they watched one minute of a 'Dracula' film without music and proceeded to successfully compose appropriate music for it. They are also preparing for the practical examination and starting to build up a composition portfolio. Pupils in Year 11 are revising material learnt in previous years and completing the performances and compositions necessary for the GCSE examination in the summer. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve satisfactorily, whilst the higher attainers achieve well.

200. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The department's policy of making music accessible to all pupils and students regardless of musical ability results in special educational needs pupils being able to produce good results, thus boosting their self-esteem. Provision for the higher attaining pupils is good and should improve once the regular setting of targets, which occurs in the GCSE classes, permeates all years. High attaining pupils receive extra challenge not only from instrumental lessons, rehearsals and concerts, but also from contact with many professional musicians. The numerous events promoted by the department, often in connection with other departments from the school of creative and expressive arts, are a strength of the college.
201. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in all year groups are good and sometimes very good. This is largely due to the interesting and enjoyable nature of the lessons and the opportunities provided for all pupils to achieve at their own level. Pupils listen carefully to the teachers' instructions and move quickly to their work areas in order to achieve as much as possible in the time allowed by the short lesson. Pupils work well in groups or pairs and have good relationships with the teachers.
202. Teaching is always good and sometimes very good. Both teachers guide pupils to self discovery, either by the skilful use of questioning or through practical experiences. The teachers' very good knowledge of the subject is used to good effect and underpins pupils' achievement. Lessons are well planned with a realistic use of the short amount of time available in the lesson and there is an appropriate sense of pace. Unfortunately, lack of time at the end of lessons precludes performances of work prepared during the lesson and the learning opportunities that can result are not taken. Resources are well prepared and appropriately chosen. Teachers' expectations are high. Tasks are clearly explained and teachers' own demonstrations provide good models of high quality performance. Contributions to pupils' literacy development can be found in the encouragement given by the teachers to use musical terminology in answering questions and the presence of key words on the classroom walls. However, the pupils will gain more benefit if the words relating to the topic in hand are separated and placed nearer the main point of focus in the classroom. More opportunities are needed for pupils to write short sentences for homework about their performances in class, music heard, and research into new topics.
203. Since the last inspection the department's staffing has completely changed. The new head of department and his assistant have maintained the good aspects noted in the last report and rectified as many of the shortcomings as the limitations in resources will allow. Assessment results are now being used to influence curricular planning,

although more rigour is required in recording the need for change and the action taken. Marking is now more regular and contains suggestions as to how the pupils can improve their work and much more attention is given to the requirements of both the less and the more musically talented pupils. The departmental documentation is very good, the curriculum is well planned and the assessment of pupils' work is thorough. Twelve instrumental teachers from Cambridgeshire Instrumental Agency spend 43 hours in the college teaching 160 pupils and students. Although no instrumental lessons were observed, the results of teaching seen in extra-curricular activities proved it to be of a good standard. The instrumental teachers' work is supported and furthered by regular rehearsals, concerts, and productions, together with workshops run by external agencies and any other opportunities considered of musical value by the energetic, non-flagging full-time staff. A part-time teacher spends half a day in the department coaching performing students and working with Year 8 on ICT. The department is very well managed.

204. The new accommodation has been well looked after but the unwanted noise factor mentioned in the last report is still present. The department's greatest obstacle to further improvement is the lack of basic resources. There are too few computers to enable the department properly to deliver the revised National Curriculum. There are too few keyboards and pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments for both classrooms to effectively run Year 7 to 9 classes simultaneously. The time allocated to the subject is below average and the fifty-minute lessons are too short for fully effective practical work.

### **EXPRESSIVE ARTS**

205. To offer a broader range of study opportunities to pupils in Years 10 and 11, and to cater for the needs of pupils who wish to prepare for an examination that incorporates the disciplines of music, drama and dance, the college offers the opportunity to prepare for the GCSE expressive arts examination. The high standards mentioned in the previous inspection report have been sustained and the department maintains its high profile through high quality performances to the remainder of the college, in assembly, for example, and presentations both inside and outside the college. A large number of workshops are regularly held and professionals are always willing to come to work in the college because of the high standard pupils achieve.
206. In the 2001 GCSE examination all pupils achieved A\* or B grades. While there were fewer numbers in 2001 than in previous years, this has been rectified and 16 Year 11 pupils will be taking the GCSE examination this summer; and it is anticipated that the 21 pupils in Year 10 will take the examination the year after. These high standards are a result of the exacting demands teachers make on pupils in lessons and the underlying philosophy that all activities must be presented to the very best of all pupils' ability. Pupils rise to meet these demands and have similar high expectations of each other. They experience much enjoyment and derive a great deal of satisfaction from their work. In the lessons and other activities observed the productive relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers were very apparent. These help to create an atmosphere of trust that permeates all lessons. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 lesson where two pupils worked with a disabled pupil performing a presentation on

human rights. They all started in wheelchairs, and all pupils eventually discarded them. For the disabled pupil, this was a great step forward and a boost to her self-confidence. Pupils express themselves assertively, using appropriate technical language without fear of ridicule. They model themselves on the very good examples set by their teachers. They collaborate well in groups, negotiating the final outcome.

207. Teaching is very good, with lessons often being taught by two teachers simultaneously. This leads to very exciting lessons, with the teachers building on each other's ideas. This enables pupils to derive the maximum benefit from the teachers' considerable knowledge and experience. Each lesson ended with pupils being given a series of targets to achieve by the next lesson. Pupils meet these targets to ensure that their individual contribution is equal to that of the rest of the class. This is a very worthwhile course, which makes an important contribution to the personal development of not only those pupils participating, but also those who experience the outcomes.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good management and leadership.
- Dedicated staff and good teaching.
- A very good range of extra - curricular activities.
- Very good links with primary schools.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning, to show more clearly the specific skills and knowledge to be developed in units of work
- The use of ICT.
- More challenging and open-ended work in the GCSE theory course.

208. The 2001 Teachers' Assessments show standards to be broadly average at the end of Year 9. These assessments are confirmed by inspection evidence and represent satisfactory achievement from standards of attainment on entry to the college. Standards are maintained through Years 10 and 11 and are consistent with national expectations for pupils following the core course in physical education. Again, these standards represent satisfactory achievement from the end of Year 9. The achievement of pupils following the GCSE course is good and the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the 2001 examination was above the national average. These results reflect the general trend over recent years.

209. In Year 7 pupils work hard to improve their floor work in gymnastics. High attainers use good levels of imagination and control to link moves that involve four different floor movements. Very good progress is demonstrated when they adapt these moves to explore other aspects such as balance and shape. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident and this is seen in less challenging balances and changes in direction in the moves they attempt. During netball lessons in Year 10 pupils make good progress in learning different types of passes. Lower attainers struggle to consistently catch the ball and lose direction when passing. However, the majority are able to execute the chest

and shoulder passes and then progress quickly to a series of drills involving two against one. Pupils' use of the bounce pass is less secure. The majority of pupils make good progress in trampoline lessons in Year 10 and are able to link five movements successfully. Higher attainers succeed in linking eight moves while demonstrating good levels of tension and control in their forward and closing jumps.

210. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. Teachers make good use of the detailed information provided about the specific needs of these pupils in lesson planning. Support for pupils with physical disabilities is good. In trampoline lessons they are able to participate and make good progress in developing seat drops. Both teachers and other pupils give good support in swimming lessons. They help and encourage non-swimmers to progress from attempting the crawl to backstroke, and in one lesson this enabled a pupil to succeed in crossing the width of the pool.
211. Particular strengths in the work seen lie in swimming and traditional games such as football, basketball, netball and hockey. Swimming standards are above average, with the majority of pupils in Year 7 able to swim using the crawl stroke while making good progress in learning the backstroke. Higher attainers demonstrate strength together with a good level of skill in using lateral breathing in the crawl. Pupils are asked to referee on occasions and consequently, by Year 9 most pupils have a sound knowledge of the rules of games such as hockey. They are able to discuss the need to consider forward and defence positions at penalty corners and explain the positioning. Standards of practical work across the college are average for most pupils. In hockey by Year 9, higher attainers are able to carry out the push pass with accuracy and control, while the majority of pupils are able to pass and receive the ball with increasing precision. However, poor body positioning when making a pass or shooting is a general weakness in basketball in Year 9 and poor body positioning when playing strokes is evident in badminton in Year 10. The majority of pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the need to use space in various drills such as those involving one against two, and two against three. By Year 10 pupils have made satisfactory progress in netball and basketball and are able use chest and shoulder passes effectively. However, the ability for most pupils to combine appropriate footwork and body positioning when approaching a shooting opportunity is a weakness.
212. A developing aspect of the subject is health-related fitness and here lower attainers in Year 9 demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of different levels of fitness and how these can be tested. Pupils are able to carry out their own warm-up exercises and are able to talk about the effects on the body of health-related exercise. By Year 9 pupils have the confidence and knowledge to be able to lead a warm-up session prior to hockey practice.
213. Pupils benefit from the highlighting of subject-specific key words as part of the department's literacy policy. However, the many opportunities to reinforce numeracy during physical education lessons are not always taken. In theory lessons pupils carry out practical investigations that involve the measurement of heart rates and they present data in table form. However, not enough use is made of computer technology for activities such as data-handling and to support teaching and learning generally.

214. Achievement in GCSE practical lessons is good and pupils show above average skill levels. This is particularly noticeable where pupils take the opportunity to practise and improve their skills through participation in extra-curricular activities. This was very evident in a Year 11 basketball lesson, for example, where members of the basketball team demonstrated very effective use of space and good dribbling and lay-up skills. In theory lessons pupils in Year 11 are able to explain the importance of diet to the growth of healthy bones and to identify and classify the main skeletal bones. The majority of pupils are able to accurately describe the function of each type of bone, correctly identifying the flat bones as protecting the vital body organs while long bones facilitate the main movements of the body. Pupils show a good understanding of the reasons why people participate in sport and have a good knowledge of safety in sport.

215. Teaching was never less than satisfactory in the lessons observed and often better. This underpins pupils' progress and achievement. Where teaching is at its best, specific learning objectives are made very clear to pupils and expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high. When this happens pupils' learning is accelerated and standards of work rise. For example, in a very good Year 7 gymnastics lesson the interaction of well-structured learning activities and the positive attitudes of pupils led to rapid progress in learning. Across the college teachers manage pupils well, establish good relationships and create positive learning environments. However, lesson planning does not always allow for pupils to evaluate each other's work. Additional activities are provided for higher-attaining pupils but not in all lessons. In GCSE theory the range of teaching methods is too limited and not enough use is made of problem-centred approaches.
216. The leadership and management of the subject are good and priorities for improvement focus clearly on raising standards and the quality of teaching. The department has introduced new courses and is concerned to offer activities such as aerobics and rowing that will have wide appeal to pupils. Monitoring procedures are in place and involve the head of department and senior management in overseeing teaching and work sampling. There is a good range of information that allows the department to track pupils' attainment and achievement levels, although more could be done to identify where value is added in the subject. A good system of target setting is in place and pupils generally know what they have to do to improve their work. However, schemes of work do not have enough detail to allow teachers to identify the particular skills that need to be targeted during the unit of work.
217. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. New courses and record keeping procedures having been introduced successfully. Very good links with primary schools have been established. The subject makes good use of the Young Sports Leader Award for older pupils to coach younger pupils. Examination results are analysed and used to set targets for teachers and pupils. There is room for the further development of ICT within the subject: this has in-service training and resource implications.
218. Teachers work hard to offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils and the college has been awarded the Sports Mark in recognition of the quality of its sport and community links. These include many inter-school and inter-form competitions, as well as visits abroad. There have been a number of notable successes with pupils qualifying for district and county honours. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. High quality facilities are provided by the local sports centre and good use is made of the swimming pool. Plans to develop a much-needed fitness area are in hand. A dedicated teaching base for the teaching of GCSE theory lessons would help the development of subject-specific resources and displays.

## **DANCE**

219. Inspection evidence shows that provision in dance is a strength of the college. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average and this matches the trend in recent years. In the 2001 expressive arts GCSE examination, all pupils obtained A\* or B grades.



220. Pupils work hard in lessons to improve the quality of their performances. They show imagination and use appropriate technical vocabulary when composing their performances. In Year 8 pupils are able to identify movement phrases such as *tension*, *dynamics*, *contact*, and *fluency*. Pupils work well together and this helps them to make good progress when working with a partner on lifting techniques. Higher-attaining pupils are able to combine control with fluency as they link movements. They are able to perform movements that reflect careful thought about height, the use and position of limbs and the speed of execution of the movement. However, lower-attaining pupils are not able to share their weight effectively and as a result their movements are unbalanced and rigid. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to vary speed of movement in a way that allows them to communicate emotions such as aspects of a relationship through a dance routine. Pupils' skills are advanced to the stage where they can use the hip lift to enable them to travel across the dance floor. Similar good progress is made in Year 11, where pupils work hard to improve their performance for their examination work. Pupils are able to alter tempo and rotate while changing direction and keeping in unison with their partner. They make good use of facial expression to convey mood. Pupils work well together. They discuss their work and make joint decisions when working in pairs. During lessons they are given opportunities to perform and comment on the work of others but their evaluative skills are not yet at the level of their performance.
221. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive and they are keen to get involved and improve their skills and knowledge. Teachers have very high expectations and they communicate clearly to pupils that a commitment to produce the best quality work is required at all times. This, together with the good relationships evident in lessons, results in a very positive teaching and learning environment. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and consistently show high standards of teaching at both individual and whole-class levels. There is, however, a tendency for teachers to ask closed questions or lead the pupils rather than consistently challenging their deeper knowledge and understanding. Similarly, some skill cards could be more open-ended in the questions they set pupils. At times, the start of the lessons could be brisker to make maximum use of the time available. Teachers bring a very professional approach to their work and continually stress the need for rigour in all of the work that pupils do.
222. The department's schemes of work and curricular plans have been used at national level as a model for other schools. The subject gives very good support to whole-college aspects of education such as the development of pupils' literacy skills and their personal development. This was seen, for example, in the way in which pupils with literacy difficulties contributed to making of a film that reflects their work in dance and drama. In talking about the project the pupils spoke of the way in which their self-esteem had been enhanced and the difference the experience has made to the way in which they see college life. Subject-specific key words are displayed and writing frames used to support the development of literacy. Pupils' moral development is promoted through the department's code of conduct and through dealing with topics such as bullying, human rights and racism.
223. The subject is extremely well led by a head of department who has worked hard and inspirationally to develop dance within the college and in the wider community. There are professional artists in residence, who contribute significantly to the standards

achieved by pupils. The subject has established links with a range of national and international dance organisations and individuals. Workshops are organised for pupils to work alongside professionals and obtain valuable feedback on their ideas and performances. The subject is well placed for continued improvement.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory** in Years 7 to 9 but **good** in Years 10 and 11.

### Strengths

- Leadership of the subject is good.
- The subject co-ordinator has a strong commitment to high standards.
- The GCSE short course examination results are above average.

### Areas for improvement

- The amount of time allocated for the subject in Years 7 to 9.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress.

224. Overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is below the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Because of the rotational nature of the timetable it was not possible to observe lessons in religious education in Years 7 and 8 during the week of the inspection. Pupils' work was examined in these years. Inspection evidence shows that, although in lessons pupils are capable of attaining standards that are above expectations, standards generally are below, because the time allocated for the subject in Years 7 to 9 is not enough for full coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the beliefs and practices of one or two major world religions. They respond in a mature way when discussing different religious perspectives on questions of meaning and purpose, and are able to relate them to their own lives. For example, in their studies of Hindu beliefs about reincarnation, Year 9 pupils successfully evaluated the concept of Athman, the soul, as it applies to their own understanding of self-identity. However, achievement is below expectations because of the restricted time allocation for the subject.

225. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above the expectations both of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and those of the examination board. All pupils are entered for the GCSE short course examination and in each of the last three years, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades has been above average. These results represent good achievement when standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are taken into account. Pupils examine a range of social and moral issues such as euthanasia, abortion and AIDS. They also extend their knowledge of the lives of influential modern religious leaders, such as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Ghandi. In the ethical part of their studies, they show insight into human problems such as the poverty and suffering brought about by unfair trading and they are capable of evaluating the contribution of religious perspectives to ways of tackling these problems.

226. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, with some that is very good. Teachers plan well and have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Teachers make imaginative use of resources - for example, excellent videotapes on the food manufacturing chain and the differing profits accruing to various groups along the chain. Teachers are skilled at drawing out the main teaching points from these resources and using them to deepen pupils' understanding of the issues involved. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, effective use was made of a case study in which the distribution of profits from a coffee crop along the manufacturing chain from the farmer to distributor required pupils to examine the perspectives of all of the parties involved. Pupils considered the issues of profit and fairness in a sophisticated way and showed that they were prepared to listen to the viewpoints of others. Good relationships and a positive response from pupils underpin successful teaching and learning in religious education.
227. The subject is led effectively by the teacher in charge of religious education. She is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and provides an excellent role model as a teacher committed to high standards in religious education. She has thoughtfully produced lesson plans for the several other teachers of the subject, many of whom teach only two religious education lessons a week. However, she does not have the time to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in the subject and so is unable to identify and share good practice and areas from improvement.
228. Resources are barely satisfactory. There are not enough textbooks for the number of pupils following the GCSE course and these have to be shared. Although all teachers of the subject work hard to ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons, their major commitment is to their specialist subjects, particularly in terms of attendance at subject-related meetings. This has an adverse effect on the development of the subject. Assessment procedures and target setting are effective in Years 10 and 11 but are in the early stages of development in Years 7 to 9. The lack of curricular time for the subject during Years 7 to 9 makes the overall provision for the subject in these years unsatisfactory.
229. Since the last report, there has been considerable improvement in the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11. The good results obtained in the GCSE examination are testimony to the impact of the improved provision. However, the weaknesses in the lower years and the lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning mean that not enough progress has been made. This is a subject with many strengths and the capacity to succeed.

## PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses (7 A-level and 6 IB) were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001 (the latest year for which national results are available, for comparison).

### *GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	2	50	15	100	62	3.0	1.5
Chemistry	2	0	5	50	43	1.0	0.7
Dance	4	100	n/a	100	n/a	4.5	n/a
Sociology	1	0	7	100	63	1.0	1.2
Psychology	3	0	11	0	74	0	1.5

### *GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	6	50	43	83	87	6.0	5.8
Chemistry	7	14	43	86	90	4.9	5.9
Biology	8	0	34	88	88	3.3	5.3
Physics	5	20	40	100	88	5.2	5.7
Physical Education	9	0	25	89	92	3.1	5.1
Economics	7	14	36	71	89	3.1	5.5
Art and Design	3	67	46	100	96	8.7	6.6
Music	1	100	35	100	93	8.0	5.7
Drama	7	29	38	100	99	6.0	6.6
Media Studies / Performing Arts	30	37	31	100	93	6.8	5.5
Geography	1	0	38	100	92	4.0	5.7
History	10	30	35	100	88	5.8	5.5
Psychology	17	0	34	71	87	2.4	5.3
Sociology	9	33	35	78	86	4.7	5.3
English Language / Literature	2	50	30	100	92	5.0	5.3
English Literature	12	25	37	100	95	5.0	5.9
German	1	100	40	100	91	10.0	5.8

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered mathematics in detail, including A-level and AS-level courses. In sciences, the focus was on biology and chemistry but physics was also sampled. In **physics**, examination results at A-level in 2001 were well below the national average but low numbers of entries make comparison with national figures meaningless. Bearing in mind their GCSE results, students did as well as could be expected in both A-level and AS-level examinations. In addition to the scrutiny of students' work, one lesson was observed during the inspection. Teaching and learning were good in this lesson because the lesson was well structured to challenge and extend students' knowledge. Inspection evidence shows students' attainment to be consistent with course expectations and above that indicated by past examination results.

### MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Results at GCE A-level were above the national average in 2001.
- Results at GCE AS-level were encouraging with over a quarter of students achieving grades A or B in 2001.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Good range of mathematics courses.
- Students are enthusiastic and work hard.

#### Areas for improvement

- Student participation and the range of teaching strategies used in lessons.
- The co-ordination of the many sixth form courses in order to maximise the considerable expertise that exists within the staff of the department.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

230. In 2001 the results achieved by the all male entry for GCE A-level were above the national average for A – B grades. All students achieved a pass grade. The 2001 student performance at AS-level was very encouraging with two thirds of the students gaining an A – E grade. Over a quarter of these students gained an A or B grade. The performance by male and female students was very similar. All but one student has returned to complete the A2 course. A number of A2 students are to retake some or all of their AS-level modules this year.

231. Students currently studying mathematics are achieving very well. This reflects well on the good teaching and students' positive attitudes and response to the courses offered. For example, in a very good Year 13 further mathematics lesson on functions and their associated graphs students successfully used their knowledge of transformations to identify and name the variations to standard functions. Students in another Year 13 A-level lesson extended their knowledge of random variables by calculating the expectation and variance for the tossing of two coins. By selecting this example all students were able to demonstrate their understanding to their teacher through the programming of a palm top computer to display the resulting outcomes.

232. Students in all courses are developing good analytical skills and learning to draw on prior knowledge gained from the GCSE course or its equivalent. The good teaching of mathematical methods is clearly evident in students' work and through appropriate selected practice questions. However, there is limited evidence to show that students have been encouraged to think about different approaches to finding the solutions to problems overall. In planning lessons teachers need to consider the intellectual and creative development of students in addition to developing their skills at solving standard problems. The consolidation of learning through practice questions is essential but this should not preclude the use of other forms of learning such as investigation and research.
233. Inspection evidence shows that Year 12 students have made a very positive start to their courses. They are consolidating and building on their previous learning. Students new to the college settle well and, although many have limited English initially, they cope well with the demands of the subject. For example, in one Year 12 lesson, students were extending their knowledge of algebraic equations through the use of differential calculus to determine the turning points of different curves. Effective teaching enabled most students to confidently undertake the process. Students in another group, learning how to use the periodic and symmetrical nature of trigonometric functions, were able to determine the value of angles greater than 90 degrees. However, difficulties were experienced by some students with expressing these values as a rational number owing to their lack of understanding that these values all referred to the right-angled triangle. The timely intervention of the teacher ensured that this stumbling block was removed.
234. The application of number key skills lessons for students in Year 12 is of particular benefit to those not studying AS mathematics. Students studying this key skill are using their knowledge gained from GCSE effectively to solve problems from the world of work.
235. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good and often very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and experience effectively in teaching the methods needed to solve standard problems in each of the AS and A2 modules. The use of probing questions was most effective in a Year 13 further mathematics group. The responses given by students enabled the teacher to probe further and as a result was able to make an informed assessment of their gains in knowledge and understanding of the topic. In all lessons the good teaching is exemplified by the teaching of mathematical methods supported through appropriate exemplification. In doing so teachers provide students with a thorough set of notes and examples to support their individual study. However, not in every lesson were students challenged rigorously enough by their teacher about these methods and why they work. This is particularly important for those students at an early stage with their English language development. Opportunities for more open discussion and student participation are occurring in some lessons and this is enhancing the current range of teaching and learning styles in use. In all lessons students receive effective individual support, praise and encouragement from their teacher. This enables them to consolidate their learning and move on with greater confidence.
236. Students' work is marked and assessed regularly, and the written comments provide them with sufficient guidance to know what to do to improve. The work of students in

Year 12 is more comprehensively marked and the diagnostic assessment given by teachers enables students to be more aware of their weaknesses and how they should go about improving their overall standards.

237. The enthusiasm shown by teachers for the subject has considerable impact on students and their attitude to learning. Students are attentive, work well together, share ideas, support and help each other. There is a general enthusiasm for the subject. The atmosphere in lessons reflects the growing positive relationship that has been forged between students and their teachers.
238. Students have access to ICT within the subject and resources for learning are adequate, although there is a shortage of suitable textbooks for students studying further mathematics. Students are encouraged to make good use of the college's library and develop good independent learning habits.
239. Teachers are well matched to the curricular requirements of the AS and A2 examinations. There is a need for greater co-ordination of all sixth form courses within the department. Through regular discussion about teaching and learning, policies and strategies, the individual experience of teachers is effectively channelled to improve their teaching and hence standards of students' attainment. The department actively encourages students to attend lectures at universities and they often hear visiting speakers talk about career opportunities in mathematics.

## BIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The achievement of students is at least satisfactory.
- Teaching is good.
- Students' attitudes are good.

### Areas for improvement

- The practical skills of students with English as an additional language.
- The threshold attainment level for admission to the A-level course.

240. Results in the A-level examination over the last four years, have all been well below the national average. However, group sizes in Year 13 have all been small and so comparative statistical data are not reliable. Comparison of students' GCSE point scores with the results obtained in the A-level examination shows that achievement at the end of Year 13 is at least satisfactory. A very small number of candidates have been entered for the AS-level examinations in the last two years and again the results are below average when compared to national figures, but the small number of entries makes any conclusions statistically unreliable.
241. As in previous years there is only a small number of students following the A2 level course. Inspection evidence shows the standards of work of students presently in Year 13 are consistent with course expectations. In a lesson on a health and fitness topic, for example, students were able to devise their own exercise plan, measure each other's pulse rate and blood pressure and explain their results in terms of the cardiac cycle. In the larger Year 12 group, standards of work are also generally consistent with course expectations. In a lesson on respiratory surfaces, for example, most of the students were able to work independently to set up microscopes, select appropriate slides and make accurate drawings of cells. However, the practical skills of some of the students with English as an additional language were very limited and restricted their ability to work independently. In this lesson the teacher was able to provide effective support as the remainder of the group were able to work independently.
242. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good. Teachers have very good relationships with their students and create a classroom ethos in which students work hard, with the confidence that they have the support of their teachers. Lessons are well planned and contain demanding and interesting activities that keep students' attention and give them confidence about their examination performance. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and they use question and answer sessions very well in order to ensure that students know exactly what they have to do and to check regularly on their understanding of what is being taught. Good use is made of resources to support students' work in the classroom. Homework is used effectively and examination questions are referred to regularly so that students are well prepared for them. Some use is made of ICT in practical work within biology and this could usefully be extended.



243. Students' attitudes are always positive. Relationships between staff and students are good and students work well together. Most students participate actively in lessons and show interest in their work. Some are particularly responsive in question and answer sessions and are ready to ask their own questions to probe further. However, a small number of students lack the confidence to engage fully in these sessions. Teaching and learning in biology are enhanced by the use of visiting speakers and an extensive programme of visits. All biology students take part in a residential field course.
244. Biology is co-ordinated effectively within the science department. Teamwork is good but there is very little opportunity for the head of biology to monitor the work of the other biology teachers. The assessment of students' work is thorough and used effectively to monitor student performance and set targets for improvement. Marking is encouraging and gives good guidance on what students need to do in order to raise the standard of their work. No information on this course was given in the last inspection report but the results from the last three years suggest that there has been little change since that time.
245. Results from the A-level biology course have been disappointing when compared with national averages but are satisfactory when value-added information is applied. Many students are accepted onto the course with borderline GCSE grades and hence find the advanced course very demanding. Some students may repeat a year but in some cases it must be questioned as to whether this is the most appropriate course. The use of ICT within the course could be extended. The admission of students with non-traditional backgrounds during the year needs careful monitoring. The AS-level course lasts effectively for only nine months and students who are in the early stages of English language acquisition have difficulty in coping with the demands of the course, as do students with limited practical skills.

## CHEMISTRY

Overall, the quality of provision for chemistry is **good**.

### Strengths

- Subject leadership.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm to share it with students.
- The achievement of students in relation to standards of attainment on entry to the course.

### Areas for Improvement

- Students' practical skills.
- Resources to support teaching and learning.

246. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were well below the national average. They were lower than those of the previous year but similar to those obtained in 1999. Seven candidates, six male students and one female student, entered the examination. A range of grades was obtained but only one candidate gained a higher grade. Nevertheless, when standards of attainment on entry to the course are taken into account, the results represent good achievement on the part of students. The results of a similar sized group of students who entered the IB examination obtained results that compared well with worldwide averages. Nine students entered the GCE AS-level

examination and their results were well below the national average. The performance of those students who obtained a grade was consistent with their previous performance in the GCSE examination.

247. Inspection evidence shows the standard of work of the students in Year 13 to be broadly consistent with course expectations. In the theory modules taken in the 2001 AS-level examination, their results were consistent with the national average, but those in the practical component were well below. Students make good progress and have sound knowledge of the topics already covered in the course. Through tests and written work they show that they have, for example, a good understanding of the chemistry of hydrocarbons. They are familiar with the concept of oxidation number and can relate this to a good understanding of the transition elements. This knowledge is extended through a practical project in which they set out to find the amount of iron in an iron tablet. They can deal competently with equations related to the Law of Equilibrium.
248. Although the attainment of students presently in Year 12 is below course expectations, they are achieving standards that are consistent with expectations based on their levels of attainment in the GCSE examination. Higher-attaining students have a good understanding of the topics already covered in the AS-level course. They know about atomic structure, its relationship to the periodic table and about ionisation energies. They can carry out simple experiments to determine the strengths of solutions. The knowledge of some students, who attained lower grades in the GCSE examination, or who have transferred from other schools or other countries, is less secure. Tests reveal, for example, that some do not understand what is meant by isomers in relation to simple organic compounds. In a practical lesson related to enthalpy changes, some students for whom English is an additional language had difficulty understanding the instructions despite the efforts made by the teacher to clarify them. This limited progress in the lesson.
249. Although the quality of students' written work in both Year 12 and Year 13 varies, it is mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers give students excellent guidance and their notes are clear and pertinent. Worksheets are used appropriately. Some students, however, do not take sufficient care over the presentation of their work and this creates difficulties for them when organising their revision. There is little evidence to show that they engage in challenging discussion or debate and there are few opportunities to make presentations to others in the group. Most students, many of whom also study mathematics, approach the numerical parts of the syllabus confidently and competently. Under very good guidance from their teachers, students are developing as independent learners. The provision of books in the library for sixth form science students is limited.
250. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject and communicate enthusiasm for the subject in their teaching. Relationships are very good. Lessons are, in general, well planned but teachers do not always pay enough attention to anticipating some of the problems that might arise. For example, a Year 12 group was observed finding the enthalpy change in a variety of alcohols. Following a good introduction by the teacher, students performed an investigation to compare the amount of energy produced when burning different alcohols. Some students had low levels of confidence and revealed a lack of basic practical skills. Despite the instructions in the textbook and the teacher's introduction some students did not

understand the procedures required to find the heat capacity of the apparatus. Nevertheless, the teacher was able to adapt to meet students' needs so that progress was made in the lesson.

251. Following a good introduction by the teacher about the importance of iron in the diet, a Year 13 group was asked to design an experiment to find the amount of iron in an iron tablet. They were familiar with the oxidation of iron and were able to write the appropriate equations. Although students understood what they were doing, their practical skills were insecure and their ultimate success was due partly to appropriate intervention on the part of the teacher. The same group was observed in a very good lesson in which they discussed combustion analysis and derived molecular and empirical formulae. They learned how the mass spectrometer works and then examined and interpreted a range of spectra displayed on a computer from a CD-ROM. Students appreciated the teacher's command of the subject. The lesson had a variety of activities, was challenging, and maintained interest. Achievement was good as a result. The quality of marking is very good and students are provided with clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. The department gives excellent guidance to students on how to make notes.
252. The head of chemistry provides strong leadership and sets a good example in lesson preparation and student management. Others who also teach the subject work well together and are committed to raising standards. Their efforts are well supported by a team of laboratory technicians. Although the accommodation used for the subject is adequate there is a shortage of some important pieces of equipment.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

There are no ICT-related courses taught in the sixth form. A very small number of students are seeking to obtain the Level 2 ICT key skills award. Inspection evidence shows that students have well developed skills in the use of ICT. Particularly effective use is made of the Internet for personal research and independent learning.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

A general physical activities course is available to all students. In addition, an AS-level course in sports science has recently been introduced. The 2001 results were below average when compared with national data. However, the results represent satisfactory achievement when standards of attainment on entry to the course are taken into account. Inspection evidence shows standards to be consistent with course expectations. Students are developing a range of skills and knowledge about games such as volleyball. They carry out volleying practices effectively and show good control and precision in their shots. Effective use is made of video recordings for students to evaluate and improve their performance. In theory lessons students demonstrate an increasing knowledge of health-related fitness, together with the social and cultural aspects of sport. Higher attainers write in considerable detail and show a good understanding of the different components of a personal fitness programme. Lower

attaining students write in less detail and tend to describe activities rather than evaluate their contribution to the development of personal fitness. Students are able to analyse video recordings effectively and identify key coaching points such as body tension, timing and disguise in volleyball and basketball. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and the degree of rigour expected from the students is consistently high. Some students adopt a casual approach to physical work that is not always challenged by teachers.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus of this report is on A-level in drama. During the course of the inspection A-level and IB courses in art and music, the IB course in dance and the course leading to the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in performance studies were also sampled.

### **ART**

The numbers of students following the A-level courses is small. This makes statistical comparisons with national figures unreliable. Nevertheless, the 2001 A-level results were above the national average, with all three candidates gaining A or B grades. Students presently in Year 13 are achieving similarly good standards. All students following the AS-level course gained grades in the A to E range. More female students than males take the subject and their achievements are broadly similar. The IB course is a popular sixth form choice, with eight students completing the course in 2001. Results are above the worldwide average. IB and AS students are taught together. This arrangement works well. Because the quality of the teaching is good, students with limited artistic experience before joining the course make rapid progress. All students are required to make a personal record as they study the lives and work of notable artists. These are beautifully and uniquely presented and demonstrate a mature understanding of the aims, influences and methods used by those artists. By Year 13 students develop a personal style and their work shows independence of mind and artistic awareness. Sixth form students are well motivated to pursue their studies and many proceed to art and design courses in higher education. Enthusiastic teachers provide a variety of rich experiences for students, including visits to galleries and museums, artists in residence, life drawing sessions and overseas visits. The effective use of a variety of media adds to the sound basis of drawing skills that are encouraged by the department.

### **MUSIC**

Standards in music in Years 12 to 13 are above average. Students in Year 12 are preparing for the IB diploma, while in Year 13 one student is preparing for the A-level examination and the other for the IB award. In Year 12 students are required to perform to the remainder of the class on a regular basis. To help the performers gain a deeper understanding of the music they are trying to communicate, they also give a pre-performance talk about the piece. In doing this students demonstrate effective analytical skills and the ability to place the work in its historical context. Students demonstrate good composition and listening skills. Pupils in Year 13 are in the final stages of preparation for the forthcoming examination. In the lesson observed, students were performing to each other and giving helpful criticism and suggestions for improvement. These comments were skilfully summarised and developed by the teacher.

Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good, particularly in Year 12. The college offers numerous opportunities for students to participate in workshops and extra-curricular activities. A Year 13 student recently won the composition prize in the national finals of the Amnesty International awards. Teaching is of a very good standard, with staff enabling students to develop the skills necessary for success in their future studies. Accommodation is good but resources are unsatisfactory, particularly in the availability of ICT. The recording studio is not equipped to meet the requirements of the A-level technology course due to start in September 2002.

## PERFORMING ARTS

As part of the inspection of the general contribution of performing arts to the life of the college, four sixth form performing arts lessons were sampled. Provision in performing arts is excellent and examination results in 2001 were of the same high standard as in earlier years. All lessons were well prepared and showed an increase in the demands of the already exacting requirements observed in the expressive arts lessons observed in Years 10 to 11. Many students are preparing for the rigorous auditions for entry to performance institutions. The high quality of students' work was displayed in a thought provoking dance performed in a college assembly. Specialist accommodation is good but there are not enough suitably sized practice areas. As a result some students have to rehearse in the vestibule of the music building with the inevitable disruption to surrounding classes.

## DRAMA

The focus was on GCE A-level Drama. One IB drama lesson was also sampled. In this lesson the problems of refugees were explored. Students performed to very good standards and displayed realistic interpretations of hatred, boredom, and contempt.

Overall, the quality of provision in drama and theatre studies is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Clearly focused leadership.
- Very good teaching.
- Very good extra-curricular provision.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' written evaluations of their performances.
- The accommodation.

253. Twenty students take GCE AS or A-level drama. Results in drama in the 2001 examinations were consistent with the national average. The proportions of students gaining A or B grades in the last two years has been about the same as the national average. There is no clear evidence of differences in attainment by male and female students. When standards of attainment on entry to the course are taken into account, students' achievement is very good.

254. Inspection evidence shows that standards are above those attained in the 2001 examination. Standards of performance are above standards of written work. Students'

folders demonstrate a good range of responses to both current and historical plays. Higher-attaining students use specific vocabulary to support well-focused analyses. A good example of this was seen in the work on Euripides 'The Trojan Women'. Nearly all the written work seen was of a high quality and the students' analysis was sensitive and reflective. However, some of the work on Brecht and the epic theatre fell below this standard. The work showed an over-reliance on commercially produced materials, with little individuality in the responses of some students.

255. Students' understanding of the concepts and conventions of drama are very good overall. Students' mature interpretation of Euripides' 'The Trojan Women' displayed understanding of the place of ceremony in Greek tragedy. Higher-attaining students were able to plan and perform with conviction and confidence. Students demonstrated a sound understanding of technical and design elements of theatre in lessons on 'Six Characters in Search of an Author'. In a series of lessons they were able to work with a teacher and with a professional actor. As a result, rapid gains were made in learning. In this lesson all students moved effectively from text to performance. The students confidently explored a range of performance skills and managed to sustain complex characters. Higher-attaining students showed an awareness of dramatic pace and delivered sensitive and reflective pieces of drama. Lower-attaining students had difficulty exploring a range of voice. However, this particular lesson took place in the college hall where voice projection was affected by poor acoustics.
256. All students work well together. They work as responsible members of the group and are aware of the needs of others. Students have highly developed skills of collaboration and negotiation that enable them to produce practical work of a very high standard. Their skills of self-analysis help to improve performance.
257. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and convey their enthusiasm to their students. Work is challenging and expectations are very high, especially when students are working with the professional actor. Planning is excellent and a real strength of the department. Planning incorporates detailed analysis of students' achievement and targets are set for individual improvement. However, more emphasis needs to be placed on students' written work and on strategies to improve the assessment of this work. Assessment criteria need to be shared with students in each lesson in order to improve their performance and their written conclusions.
258. Subject leadership is very good. Detailed analysis of students' attainment informs planning and ensures appropriate teaching. Planning demonstrates a good balance of activities, allowing freedom of expression but also providing a framework of support. The use of all resources is very good, including the use of a professional actor and links with professional theatre companies. Teachers give freely of their time to enrich students' learning beyond the college day. They provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities including workshops and visits to the theatre. The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers is enriching students' experience and helping to raise standards further.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on A-level courses in history and psychology. **Geography** was also sampled.

## GEOGRAPHY

Numbers of A-level students are small. There was only one A-level candidate in 2001 and so comparison with national figures is meaningless. Examination results broadly reflect the standards of work observed in the inspection. Students taking geography generally start the course with lower GCSE grades and achievement by the end of Year 13 is satisfactory. Teaching is good. Strengths include good subject knowledge and high expectations of students.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- A-level examination results were above the national average in 2001.
- Teachers provide students with a high level of individual support.
- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Students respond well to the A-level course and work hard.

### Areas for improvement

- The marking and correction policy.

259. A-level results have shown an improvement over the past three years, even though students opting for A level tend to have a weaker academic profile than those choosing the IB. In 2001, overall results for A level were above the national average. Girls did better than boys, as the overall results for boys fell below the national average. The majority of students either attained or improved upon their predicted grades, based on performance in the GCSE examination. History was one of the most successful subjects in value added terms in the college.

260. Teachers demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge and this helps students to develop a firm understanding of the topics under study. A clear effort is made to draw students closer to the subject, not only as a result of the style of teaching but also in the choice of topics - for example, civil rights in the USA between 1945 and 1968. Teachers aim to support students' development as historians and to enable them to identify with the discipline. Students develop a good sense of chronology and causation. They develop the ability to articulate their views and to think historically. Higher achievers exercise critical judgement in the evaluation of interpretations and support their arguments intelligently. Their contributions in lessons show perception and a decisive critical focus.

261. Teachers work hard to provide well-managed lessons, using a variety of tasks to challenge students. They engender a sense of historical enquiry and lay stress on historical sources and their interpretation. Emphasis is placed on the reliability of

evidence, and one class was observed in the process of searching for sites on the worldwide web which conformed to five different standards of reliability, as described by the teacher. Care is taken in the way that information is imparted to students and the value of historical evidence is underlined. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and linked to examination standards. Lessons are tightly planned and include a variety of activities. Through skilful intervention, teachers check on learning during lessons and guide students to the roots of knowledge and understanding. Students respond well to this approach and the progress made in lessons is good.

262. Analysis of written work shows that students are making systematic progress. It is clear that they are using a range of materials and that they are being challenged appropriately to develop skills of analysis, interpretation and synthesis. Although standards of written assignments are varied, there is good evidence that students steadily acquire confidence in extended writing and in their developing ability to challenge the assumptions implied in a question. They demonstrate an ability to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively, although not all aspects of the historical issues under review are necessarily addressed.
263. Discussion with students supports the view that they are motivated to succeed and that they are benefiting from the international dimension that permeates the department and the sixth form. Students understand how well they are doing and are open to guidance as to what they must do to succeed.
264. The rapport between teachers and students is positive and underlies the attitudes of students to their work. Teachers offer students high levels of support and have an excellent understanding of their individual requirements. The students realise that they are being well taught and feel encouraged by their progress. Evaluation of classwork and homework is regular and meaningful, although marking could be made more effective by the addition of consistently detailed and constructive comments. More extensive diagnostic feedback would enable students to focus on, and eradicate, individual weaknesses. In the same way, the clarity of written work could be enhanced by highlighting spelling mistakes and poor grammar and sentence construction.
265. Students have good access to ICT within the subject, which they apply appropriately. Resources held by the department are good but the college library holds only a limited stock of books to support A-level courses. Where appropriate, students are encouraged to borrow books from local and university libraries. Visits to sites of historical interest are arranged to support topics of study - for example, 40 students from the sixth form will visit Russia in March 2002. Students contribute to a broad and interesting range of extra-curricular activities and contribute to assemblies and displays that celebrate historical events. The department actively encourages students to attend lectures at universities.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Overall, provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The attitudes and enthusiasm of students for the subject.



- Very good coursework.
- The use of structured worksheets.

#### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- The use of questioning to ensure that students fully understand learning activities in lessons.

266. The most recent A-level results in psychology were below the national averages, both for the proportion of students obtaining a pass grade and for the proportion of students obtaining the higher A or B grades. The results in 2000 were very similar. AS level results in 2001 were above those obtained in 2000. Almost all students obtained pass grades, with almost a half gaining A or B grades. Comparison of the standards attained in the AS and A-level examinations with students' GCSE grades shows they broadly achieved as well as expected. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by male and female students. The most recent IB higher level results are above the international average, while the standard level results are below average. These results have been fairly consistent over the past three years. Again there are no consistent differences in the standards attained by male and female students. Results are broadly consistent with predictions based on standards of attainment on entry to the course.
267. Inspection evidence shows standards to be better than indicated by recent examination results. The work of Year 13 students is at a level that meets the standards expected, with the work of some students exceeding them. Year 12 students are attaining standards that are consistent with expectations overall, but with a broader attainment range. Contributory factors to improved standards in Year 13 are higher standards of attainment on entry to the course, a smaller teaching group, well-structured coursework and particularly well-motivated students.
268. Year 13 students' coursework and essays show a sound understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. Their work shows an understanding of the principles of qualitative and quantitative research and the advantages and disadvantages of different research methodologies. They are able to describe and evaluate theories of child development and to compare and contrast the views of different developmental psychologists. However, students are less able to explain these differences and the contributions of different theorists orally. There are some weaknesses in students' understanding of studies of conformity and obedience. For example, they have a good understanding of the obedience studies of Milgram and the ethical issues the studies raise but are less familiar with the earlier conformity studies of Asch. Overall, students are making satisfactory progress. Year 12 students show a good understanding of different theoretical traditions in the study of psychology and the differences between innate and learned behaviour. Students with special educational needs receive good support and make similar progress to their peers. Students following the IB course show high levels of intellectual skill and depth of knowledge. Year 13 students are able to engage in undergraduate type discussions: for example, in evaluating an illustrative essay against set criteria.

269. Students show much enthusiasm for their learning. They are keen to read around the subject and this is reflected in their written work. They show respect for each other's opinions and are willing to grasp new ideas and concepts. In discussion they express their points of view forcefully, but without rancour. The subject makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Students' work is neat and well presented, reflecting diligence and good application.
270. The teaching of psychology is satisfactory, overall. Teachers are able to give clear explanations of the concepts and theories relevant to the stage of the course. However, there is some non-specialist teaching and while the teacher's subject knowledge is adequate for the stage of the course there is a need to monitor this in order to ensure that students are being adequately stretched at all levels of attainment. One of the strengths of teaching is the use of structured worksheets. These help to ensure that lesson activities have a clear focus and that students are actively involved as observers and listeners. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson, for example, where students were observing and making notes on a video-tape recording on fear. Well-structured lesson handouts provide an appropriate mix of information and guidelines for self-directed study. These contribute to the good quality of students' coursework. Teachers are willing to listen to the views of students and take time to offer explanations when questions are raised. Group work is used effectively to explore topics and allow students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. However, there is a need to ensure that explanations are fully understood before students begin to work in groups, particularly when students with English as an additional language are involved.
271. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Students' progress against predictions is carefully monitored and additional support is provided when necessary. However, the recently appointed head of department has a substantial teaching load and does not have enough time to monitor teaching and learning on the several psychology and sociology courses. There is a need to take a long-term view of the subject and to structure the staffing accordingly. Staffing is at present barely adequate for existing commitment and this limits opportunities for growth in the social science area.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

GCE AS and A2 level courses are offered in English language and English literature. The IB is offered in English, English for International Students, English literature and Media Studies. There is also a re-sit GCSE course. The focus was on English literature, but one lesson each of IB language and literature were sampled. In the IB English lesson students learned to identify specific gender-focused language in D.H.Lawrence's 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. They articulately made comparisons on the notion of femininity as expressed in a satirical extract from 'Punch' magazine. In the IB literature lesson, students learned that the meanings of words are derived from their context. In this lesson on post-structuralism, students confidently explored other theories of critical analysis and made good progress as a result.

The college provides well for the many students in the international sixth form who have English as an additional language. Appropriate courses and very good personal support are provided for them. Those who arrive with little English are given intensive language teaching.

They continue to be monitored and supported once they have reached an independent level of language. They make very good progress and many go on to study at British universities.

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

Overall, provision in English literature is **good**.

### Strengths

- Students' oral work is good. They express informed independent opinions very articulately.
- Teaching is good.
- The course is well co-ordinated by an enthusiastic and energetic teacher.

### Areas for improvement

- Reference texts.
- Students' reading around the prescribed texts and their use of ICT.
- The monitoring of the AS level course to ensure a consistent approach for all students.

272. Standards achieved in GCE AS and A-level examinations are below national averages. The proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades at A level is also lower than the national average. However, when standards of attainment on entry to the course are taken into account, students make good progress and achievement at the end of Year 13 is good.

273. Inspection evidence shows standards to be consistent with the examination results. In discussion students displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of their texts. In work on Pat Barker's novel 'Regeneration', higher-attaining students made very mature responses, which demonstrated an understanding of the finer nuances of the text. However, the high levels of insight displayed orally are not always reflected in students' written work. Although most students are able to use appropriate terminology in their writing, some lower-attaining students find it difficult to express their views clearly. These students benefit from carefully structured marking which enables them to redraft their work. The work shows considerable improvement as a result.

274. Students confidently explore a range of texts. In a lesson on Carol Ann Duffy's poetry, for example, students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the poems. This very challenging lesson enabled students to understand how the notion of changing perspectives could, over time, influence the interpretation of the text. Very good teaching encouraged students to exchange ideas and this helped their confidence to grow.

275. Students' understanding of the ways in which authors make changes in form, structure and language in order to shape meanings is less secure, particularly at AS level. Students' folders show a slow initial transition from GCSE to AS level work, but they then make rapid progress. Higher-attaining students have a secure understanding of their texts and are able to analyse how language and structure are manipulated to shape the meanings of a text. Lower attaining students have a general awareness of writers' techniques and are able to see the impact of these on meaning. However, some are unable to take their ideas further.

276. Students on the A2 course are able to articulate informed, independent opinions and judgements and share an understanding of different interpretations of literary texts. Contributions to oral work are good but written work is often weaker. A good example of lively oral responses was in a Year 12 lesson on poetry. Students worked confidently together, sharing opinions on extracts from the 'Journey of the Magi'. In this lesson they learned how personal interpretations are all equally valuable. Students learned that literary criticism is not simply a re-assembly of component parts but also an empathetic response.
277. Students' attitudes to their work are generally good. Students work well together and demonstrate mature relationships with their teachers. In some groups there is an atmosphere of shared learning experiences similar to an undergraduate seminar. However, all students need to extend their range of reading. At present their heavy workloads and the limited range of books available in the library restrict this.
278. Teaching is good overall. Teachers know the texts they teach very well, but some are less familiar with the texts being taught by other members of the English team. This has implications for the teaching of the comparative piece. However, this is a new course, which still needs further development and closer monitoring in order to provide a consistent framework for all teaching and learning. The co-ordinator recognises this and has already taken action to tackle the issue. Lesson planning is very good. The pace of lessons is challenging and students are responding well to the high expectations set by most teachers. However, in some groups students rely too heavily on background notes provided by the teacher. More needs to be done to encourage independent learning. Assessment is generally thorough and well focused. However, although some teachers clearly define specific learning targets for students this is not a consistent practice amongst all teachers. Very recently students have been encouraged to set their own A-level targets based upon their GCSE results. This is excellent practice and encourages students to achieve well. Students have access to the assessment criteria for literature in most lessons. In one lesson there was an excellent example of how these criteria were applied to a particular text with the result that students were able to focus very sharply on the key features of the text.
279. Teachers provide good support for learning beyond the classroom. All teachers make themselves available for consultation and give generously of their time. Courses are enriched by opportunities to visit the theatre and to attend conferences at the British library. However, not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.
280. The co-ordinator manages the sixth form courses very well. Staff, many of whom are new to the college, work very well together and share good practice. The team meets regularly to discuss the development of the course and the progress made by students. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the course requirements and is developing strategies for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to ensure a more cohesive approach to the course.

## **INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE**

The IB diploma programme is a demanding two-year international curriculum that leads to examinations in preparation for university entry. Candidates must offer six subjects, drawn from each of six groups (although a second subject from groups 1 to 5 may be substituted for group 6). At least three, but no more than four, subjects are taken at higher level, while the other three – or sometimes two - are taken at standard level. Higher level subjects are explored in greater depth than standard level subjects, thus offering students a deliberate compromise between specialization and breadth. For the purposes of this inspection, five subjects drawn from five groups were observed: English (Group 1 – language A1), French and German (Group 2 - second language), history (Group 3 – individuals and societies), biology and geography (Group 4 - experimental sciences), mathematics (Group 5 - mathematics). The IB programme has three important additional features: the theory of knowledge course (TOK), the creativity, action and service (CAS) programme and the extended essay (4,000 words). These obligatory requirements were also sampled.

Standards of attainment in the IB are very good. In 2001, the college results in over half the subjects entered were above the worldwide average. While the number of diploma students registered and the number of subject entries increased, the number of candidates who successfully passed the diploma also rose in 2001, and was significantly above the worldwide average. At the same time, the average points obtained by candidates who passed the diploma rose and exceeded the worldwide average. One of the very highest total point scores in the May 2001 examination session was awarded to a candidate from the college. The average grade obtained at the college by candidates who passed the diploma also rose in 2001 and exceeded the worldwide average by a comfortable margin. Performance in the TOK course in 2001 was also good as almost all students achieved a grading of good or better. This quality of performance was reflected in the classroom where Year 12 students were challenged to question the bases of their knowledge and to be aware of subjective bias. In the extended essay students again produced work of a standard which was significantly above the worldwide average.

Inspection evidence indicates that the IB is very popular with IB students and that the college has a growing reputation amongst overseas students. Students of 34 different nationalities currently make up almost half of the IB candidates. Enthusiasm for the IB is not restricted to the students: staff also speak highly of the course and almost half of the teachers in the college are involved in teaching some part of the programme. Many contribute to the CAS programme, which the college has also made obligatory for A-level students. Incorporating a broad range of activities, the CAS programme encourages students to share their time and talents with others. Students are engaged in monitored activities, such as sports, community initiatives and musical performances, which help them to develop a greater awareness of themselves and to work co-operatively with others. The IB co-ordinator energetically manages this complex diploma programme. Inspection findings suggest that the college, and specifically those concerned with administering the IB, are making an impressive attempt to educate the whole person and fostering, frequently by their own example, responsible, compassionate citizens with an open, international outlook.

## **IB: MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision for mathematics is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Results at higher level were above the worldwide average in 2001.
- Results at standard level were well above the worldwide average in 2001.
- The very good range of mathematics courses.
- Good teaching.
- Students are enthusiastic and work hard.

#### Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies.
- The full use of the considerable teaching expertise that exists within the department.

281. In 2001 students achieved above the worldwide average level in all three IB mathematics courses. Students following the standard level mathematical methods course did particularly well and achieved an average level considerably above the worldwide average. The standards at the higher level have improved in each of the last three years.

282. The two Year 13 students currently studying further mathematics at the higher level are making very good progress. They are accomplished mathematicians, who, through very good teaching, are developing very good skills of analysis and are applying theory competently to a range of challenging problems. For example, these students confidently use the theorem of Ptolemy to prove Pythagoras' theorem and the basic trigonometric identities. Students in Year 12 following the mathematical methods course make considerable gains in their knowledge and understanding of measures of central tendency. They confidently use a computer program to enter data and evaluate the various values deduced. Students for whom English is an additional language and those with little previous knowledge of statistics quickly grasp the concepts and are able to interpret the outcomes correctly. Their progress with this topic equalled that of the students with high GCSE grades.

283. Students in the other Year 12 mathematical methods course are introduced to more challenging mathematics. Throughout the course students are expected to deepen their knowledge of mathematics through a wider range of topics. For example, the concepts of expectation and chance associated with probability are new to some students and teachers need to pay particular attention to the language used to explain these terms when planning lessons. Students in one of the Year 12 groups who have selected the standard level mathematics studies course build successfully on their knowledge and understanding from GCSE. For example, they confidently recall the relationship between the sides and angles of a right-angled triangle and are able to apply the more complex rules of sine and cosine to non right-angled triangle problems. The very effective teaching of this group has provided all students with confidence to openly discuss their ideas and uncertainties.

284. Teaching of all IB courses is consistently good and often very good. Teachers use their expertise and experience of these courses very effectively to enthuse and motivate students. The lack of appropriate textbooks for these courses requires teachers to become very resourceful and develop much of their own supporting materials. Teachers

plan their lessons thoroughly and through well-chosen examples exemplify the topic under discussion. Students are encouraged to accurately record the notes written by teachers but in several cases students fail to do so and therefore put themselves at a disadvantage. Some students have yet to develop the skill of annotation. Similarly, not all students are developing the skill of setting out solutions to problems in a logical way. This would enable students to demonstrate the method used more clearly and allow teachers to assess their levels of understanding more accurately. Because many of the students following the IB courses initially have limited facility with the English language, teachers need to ensure through their planning that enough time is given to ensure that students understand the language used. In addition, teachers need to develop a greater range of teaching strategies, including the use of questioning, and the encouragement of more oral work.

285. In all lessons the relationships formed between teachers and their students are very good and students are very supportive of each other. Students have a very positive view about their chosen course and their enthusiasm for the subject comes through clearly on most occasions. There is a good match of teachers to the demands of courses offered. However, the distinct lack of co-ordination of these courses is detrimental to the overall effectiveness of the department at this level.

## IB: BIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for biology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Achievement is good.
- Students' enthusiasm for the course.
- The commitment of teachers.
- Close integration of home and overseas students.

### Areas for improvement

- The dissemination of good practice.
- The use of ICT.
- The practical skills of overseas students.

286. Owing to the lack of comparative national information on the IB course, comparison has to be made with average grades worldwide for English language students. Over the last three years results show a progressive rise and in 2001 were high in relation to the worldwide average. As the number of candidates has varied between 10 and 19 students over the last three years, the results can be regarded as statistically significant.
287. The standards of work of students presently in Year 13 are good. Comparison with GCSE performance is not reliable as so many students, in both years of the course, have qualifications from other countries. In Year 13 students are able to build on the knowledge acquired in earlier parts of the course and to refine their understanding of some of these topics. In a lesson on oxygen dissociation, for example, students' questions and comments showed that they had begun to appreciate the way in which oxygen is transferred to different parts of the body. In another lesson students investigating the cooling produced by the evaporation of different liquids from cotton wool were able to relate their results to the topic of homeostasis. Standards of numeracy and written work are good. A particular strength of students' work in Year 13 is the wide range of assessed practical reports they produce. Year 12 students have already produced an impressive number of these reports and one group was working on an investigation on the rate of reaction between glucose and yeast with considerable confidence and enthusiasm and showed well-developed practical skills. Overseas students integrate extremely well with home students and are coping well with the demands of the course in terms of both language and practical skills.
288. Teaching is good and often very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in lesson planning. A key feature of teaching is the enthusiasm for the course. Teachers devote their time generously to the students. Teaching is systematic and sensitive to students' levels of knowledge and understanding. This is a complex issue, given the very wide range of science and language backgrounds of students before beginning the course. Teachers ensure that students build step by step on earlier learning, usually through sensitive questioning of the group. In a lesson on protein synthesis, for example, students were led gently through the difficult ideas involved by use of brainstorming, note-making and questioning. Some good use is made of ICT in practical work: this needs to be extended. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and students work well together. Students participate actively in lessons and



show enthusiasm for practical and written work. They are very responsive in question and answer sessions and are ready to ask their own questions. There are extensive opportunities for visits and all students undertake a residential field course.

289. Biology is co-ordinated within the science department and, while teamwork between the biology staff is good, there is very little opportunity for the head of biology to monitor the work of the other staff. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that there is insufficient time on the college timetable to cover all the practical work demanded by the IB course. As a result, both staff and students are committed to extra lessons after the end of the college day at least once per week. The assessment of students' work is very thorough and used effectively to monitor students' performance and to set targets for achievement. Marking is used effectively for the further raising of standards. No information on this course was given in the previous inspection report but the results from the last three years plus the achievement of the current students suggest a steady improvement in attainment since that time.
290. Students' attainment, attitudes and staff expertise are being maintained at a high level. There is a need to devote more time at the start of the course to ensure that all students' practical skills are at a level that would be expected of a successful GCSE candidate. Integration of the whole course within the college day would make the demands on staff and students more reasonable. The use of ICT within the course could be extended so that students would be able to incorporate data-logging into their investigations as a matter of routine.

## **IB: GEOGRAPHY**

Overall the quality of provision is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching.
- The assessment of students' work.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Coursework and fieldwork.
- Attitudes and relationships.

### Areas for improvement

- Recruitment to the course.
- Library resources to support teaching and learning.

291. Standards overall on the IB course are generally above the worldwide average, although students' numbers are too small to make meaningful statistical comparisons. The most recent IB examination results were well above average. Of five entries, two gained level 7 and three were at level 6, on the higher-level syllabus, the highest grades available on the IB scale.
292. The relatively small cohort following the geography IB course is truly international, with students from Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, South Africa and Germany. Given this wide range of backgrounds, comparisons of standards of attainment on entry are difficult. Nevertheless, inspection evidence suggests that students in Years 12 and 13

are achieving well. Teachers' Assessments of students' assignments shows that they are above average, and the quality of work seen during the inspection indicates that these assessments are accurate. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by male and female students or by students from different backgrounds.

293. Students have high levels of understanding and this is shown by the rapidity with which they are able to make links between cause and effect. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson, for example, in which evidence gained in a search of web sites led to some accurate hypotheses concerning the main causes of destruction in the Mexico earthquake. Students work well both individually and in small groups. They use a variety of resources well. Particularly effective use is made of computers and students are adept at using the Internet to good advantage. In-depth investigations are completed as a part of fieldwork and assignments show the applications of high order skills in the use of maps and photographic evidence. This was seen, for example, in a Year 12 study of population change in the Aragon region of Northern Spain. The international range of enquiry is strengthened by coastal studies of the Kiel region of Northern Germany, which can be compared to extended essays on coastal management in Norfolk. Practical work is well researched and the standard of written English is high. The end result is work of high quality, which is critically but constructively assessed by teachers.
294. Teaching is good and at times very good. Lessons are well planned, with learning objectives clearly conveyed to students. Teachers constantly test students' knowledge and students are well prepared for examinations. There is a very good rapport between the teacher and students, leading to very good progress in learning and confidence in the guidance offered. Good knowledge of the subject enables teachers to challenge students at all levels of attainment. This is underpinned by the accurate use of subject-specific terminology and links with other subjects such as geology and physics. The quality of marking and assessment is very good. Essays and coursework are marked regularly and provide students with clear guidance on the quality of the work and areas of improvement. This helps students to measure their progress. Students are expected to use their own initiative in developing hypotheses and in explaining their methodology when preparing presentations.
295. Students are well motivated and display mature attitudes to their work. They are attentive and positive and work hard to complete their investigations successfully. They clearly enjoy the work and positive relationships in the classroom lead to effective collaborative work. Students are fluent in the way they both answer and ask questions. Students' mathematical ability enables them full access to the subject and they are familiar with a variety of models, such as those of Christaller, Von Thunen, and Weber's theory of industrial location. They are able to apply formulae activities such as calculating streambed efficiency.
296. The subject is well organised and managed. Two teachers, who work well together, share the teaching of the course. Teachers are familiar with the IB course requirements and make good choices of case studies. All students benefit from the close monitoring of their progress against set targets. There are good sources of materials available to students but the library contains too many old texts that urgently need replacing with updated material. The accommodation is ideally suited and well-equipped.

## IB: HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Results at IB higher level were significantly above the worldwide average in 2001.
- Results at IB standard level were significantly above the worldwide average in 2001.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Students demonstrate a high level of commitment and interest.

### Areas for Improvement

- The marking and correction policy.

297. In the past three years, results in the IB have been consistently good, and the college has outperformed the worldwide average by an increasingly wide margin at standard level and higher level. In 2001 the percentage of the cohort from the college attaining the highest grade at higher level was over double the worldwide percentage. It was notable that these exceptionally high achievers were all girls. From 1999 to 2001, the cohort of students entered for higher level history has more than doubled. The department is currently testing strategies to tackle the discrepancy in achievement between boys and girls.
298. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' work confirm that achievement is very good. Students analyse historical sources rigorously and exercise critical judgement in the evaluation of different interpretations and conflicting evidence. Their written work demonstrates an ability to select and use knowledge relevantly and to construct coherent, convincing, well-supported arguments. Questions are effectively and relevantly addressed and sometimes show evidence of independent reading. Sample essays on Nazi Germany, written by Year 12 students, indicated a good command of the higher order skills of analysis and synthesis and showed that higher attaining students are developing a keen awareness of historical issues. These students pose insightful historical questions and show a high level of conceptual ability. During lessons students were observed to empathise well with historical people and issues studied and to understand and use historical conventions in the interpretation of key concepts. They made perceptive historical comparisons, analysed historical issues from different cultural perspectives and demonstrated confidence in articulating their views. Students with English as an additional language play a full part in class debates, enriching the forum of discussion by bringing different national insights to the interpretation of international issues. Students learn well and show clear progress in the development of their understanding and historical skills. Such good quality learning results from well-focused teaching, the enthusiasm engendered for the subject by the staff and the students' own highly committed application to study.
299. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and a very good understanding of the students in their classes. Although tightly planned, IB lessons allow for lively and thought-provoking discussion. Activities are varied. Teachers encourage students to deepen their empathetic understanding, as seen in a Year 12 lesson where students were carefully grouped to assume the roles, and experience the difficulties, of the negotiators at the Versailles Conference. They also

use skilful questioning techniques and role-play to heighten appreciation of the relative significance of social, political and economic factors in historical causation. Teachers clearly define the objectives of their lessons at the outset and encourage students to evaluate their own learning and progress. Good use is made of video and a rich variety of resources to enrich learning.

300. Teachers do much to prepare students for the coursework element of the IB, through fostering the acquisition of research techniques. Students are encouraged to engage in independent research and to use the college library and local university libraries to support coursework assignments and extended essay writing. They also have access to ICT. Good results in the coursework unit of the IB point to focused teaching and a facility on the part of students to manipulate an impressive variety of primary and secondary sources and support materials, including video and the Internet.
301. The rapport between teachers and students is excellent and contributes to the impressive level of commitment which the students demonstrate for their work. Relationships are characterised by mutual respect. Students appreciate their teachers and enthuse about the quality of teaching they experience in history. Students' work is marked regularly. However, marking does not always offer students the guidance they need to eradicate weaknesses in style and technique, or, in some cases, difficulties in understanding. In the same way, the clarity of written work could be improved by the adoption of a policy of highlighting spelling mistakes, and poor grammar and sentence construction. A focus on literacy skills would particularly assist students with English as an additional language to organise and communicate what they have learnt.
302. Students contribute to a broad and stimulating range of extra-curricular activities arranged by the department and take part in visits to historical sites. They also contribute to displays and assemblies which celebrate historical events. This year 40 sixth form students will have the opportunity to visit Russia.

## **IB: LANGUAGES**

In addition to French and German, Spanish was also sampled. Standards at the higher level of the IB were above the equivalent average standard at GCE A level in 2001. Most students achieved top grades. Two very good lessons were observed during the inspection. In each, the teacher's excellent command of the spoken language and very good choice of activity and resources promoted high standards of understanding and speaking. In the Year 13 lesson, on environmental and social issues arising from plans to dam a valley, students discussed transcripts of interviews and, prompted by overhead transparency maps, scripted and enacted a high quality debate between officials and villagers from the threatened area. In the Year 12 class, higher level students speculated about life on a desert island, practising the conditional tense in creative improvisations based on travel brochure texts and a cartoon.

## IB: FRENCH

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Students at both standard and higher levels achieve well and standards are above average.
- Teachers are excellent linguists and teaching is good.
- Students are highly motivated and appreciative of the help they receive.
- Opportunities for students to experience French life and culture through visits and work experience.
- The marking and assessment of work keeps students well informed of their standards.

### Areas for improvement

- The accurate written expression of students' ideas.

303. French is the most popular of the languages studied as a second language for the IB Diploma. Over the past three years standards have been consistently near the equivalent course expectation for GCE A level and in 2001 were above. In some years a small number of GCE AS and A-level students are taught in the IB higher class. In 2001 results at AS-level were above average from a small entry. From a total of 18 students entered for IB higher or standard level, a third were awarded grades 6 or 7. Three of these were at higher level and, an especially good achievement, three at standard level. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection.
304. This improvement is being sustained. Students continue to achieve well, making good progress from high GCSE grades in Year 11, most joining the sixth form from other schools, and some from abroad. Although it was not possible to observe a lesson in Year 13, discussions with students, a sample of their written work and teachers' records clearly indicate that overall standards are above the equivalent average standard at GCE A level. Most of the higher level class are predicted to achieve grades 6 or 7 in the examination. Some speak and write with near bilingual fluency and most are proficient speakers, even though some writing is still grammatically insecure.
305. Essays are rich in ideas; the best also show an ambitious range of expression and are clearly argued and constructed. Earlier work from Year 12 shows how students learnt to assimilate specific topic vocabulary and phrases and to organise their ideas coherently and logically, as in pieces on personal relationships, and the foot and mouth epidemic. The very best work is outstanding, the result of painstaking care, individual research and copious notes, which shows how every new topic is an opportunity to enlarge vocabulary and enrich expression, and above all to write accurately. For example, essays on environmental issues, human rights and healthy living show a sensitivity of style and register of language that is unusual at this stage of learning. By contrast, the typical standard level student has ideas but is inaccurate, making many errors in basic agreements and verb forms. The work nevertheless shows independence of thought and approach.
306. In Year 12 there is much variation in standards of writing. Some students, at both higher and standard levels, are uncertain over basic grammar, and some work is below

course expectations. The meaning of increasingly interesting ideas and personal views is not clear, owing to lack of both knowledge and care. Other students, however, are already showing both originality and clarity of expression, as in a standard level essay on the responsibility of the state towards the homeless. A higher level student wrote a similarly thought-provoking and almost faultless essay on alcoholism. This variation in attainment is less marked in listening comprehension and speaking, although, in the lessons observed, the higher level class spoke more freely and at greater length than the standard level class. For example, in a higher level lesson on the French educational system, students listened twice to a taped discussion and could then summarise the points made for and against going to university. They paraphrased capably, some justifying their own viewpoint by quoting at length, in indirect speech, what they had heard. The very small number of students following the GCE AS-level course in the same class showed similar understanding and oral competence. Considering that the IB standard level students have fewer lessons in which to progress, they too achieve well. In the lesson observed, although not yet understanding everything their teacher said, French was spoken throughout. Some students made brief contributions but others were able to improvise definitions of categories of television programmes and paraphrase the text. Pronunciation and intonation develop very well in both years.

307. Teaching is good: assured presence, competence in technique and fine judgement of level of challenge ensure that learning, especially through hearing and using authentic French, is good. Teachers set appropriately high expectations and conduct lessons throughout in French. They reinforce known work and use tape, transcript and text, on interesting social and moral subjects, to provide a suitably demanding context for new vocabulary and ideas. Constructive relationships help students feel they can take risks when exploring new topics and extending their own knowledge. Marking and assessment are usually thorough. The use of examination criteria and comments keep students well informed of their standards and how to improve, although comments are sometimes too brief and lack depth of analysis. In a few cases, both standard and higher level students in Year 12 need more individual support in learning to write more accurately and at greater length.
308. Students' well-developed learning skills and high level of motivation help sustain the challenging pace of teaching and so maximise time, in some cases the result of voluntary attendance at holiday revision and intensive courses. They organise their files methodically, research thoroughly and, by Year 13, write extensively. All students spend a period of time in France with an exchange partner and on work experience in Year 13. This has clear benefits for their oral work. Students have an open mind and an international outlook, which helps them write in a considered, mature way. In the best work students are able to enrich their writing by transferring accurately the language they have heard and spoken.
309. Improvement since the last inspection, in both provision and standards, has been very good. The language college, and post-16 French within it, prospers under visionary leadership, thorough curriculum planning and evaluation, and effective strategic management. Newly qualified teachers are supported well and benefit from opportunities to contribute to post-16 teaching. Links with France are strong and contribute significantly to students' high oral standards and excellent personal development. School-to-school exchange schemes are well established, and the college

has successfully used additional funding to build on them. The Dialogue 2000 scheme, now in its third year, has helped fund work-experience placements. Students are exceptionally positive about their experience and very appreciative of teachers' work on their behalf.

## **IB: GERMAN**

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students are highly motivated and achieve well: some become fluent speakers and writers of German.
- Planning for individual students' needs is good.
- Good opportunities for students to experience German life and culture at first-hand.
- Marking and assessment of work keeps students well informed of their standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Written work.
- The number of classes in each year.

310. In 2001 standards in the IB Diploma were near the equivalent course expectation for GCE A level. From a total of seven students entered for IB higher or standard level, over half were awarded grade 5, three at higher level. In some years a small number of GCE AS and A-level students are taught in the IB class. In 2001, the only A-level candidate achieved grade A.
311. Currently, few students have elected to study German at higher level, only two of eight in Year 13 and one of seven in Year 12. In such a small sample there is insufficient evidence on which to make valid comparisons of standards with equivalent standards at GCE A level. In comparison with the Year 13 French class, however, standards are not as high. Students on the IB higher level course are correctly predicted to achieve average standards, around grade 5. Given the range of their prior attainment and experience to GCSE, students' achievement is satisfactory and good in understanding and speaking. Standards relative to the stage of learning are higher in Year 12 than in Year 13.
312. Year 13 students speak competently and understand detail in tape and text. Teachers conduct lessons in German, making appropriate demands of students' listening and providing good models for them to emulate. Students understand well enough to identify relevant vocabulary in what they hear and read and, although standards of speaking vary, all can communicate with meaning. Some are fluent, discussing and expressing their own views freely. Others in the same class are more reticent and less accurate but are able to play a part in discussion. In the lesson observed, for example, all were able to express the positive and negative aspects of nations' stereotypical images of each other. Students achieve particularly well in this aspect of the work.

313. Written work is below the standard of oral work. While most students have good ideas and learn to organise them methodically, these are spoilt by loose expression and grammatical structure. Some work shows good progress in linking ideas, for example in analytical accounts of the differences between education systems, and extending them with reasons and justification for personal opinions, as in discursive writing on foreign workers, mass tourism and the dangers of smoking. The best work is above the equivalent average standard at GCE A level but most remains below what is expected at this stage, in some cases still marked by confusion over clause structure and tenses, and recurring faults of case ending and word order.
314. Standards are higher in Year 12 both orally and in writing. In one lesson, students could sustain the spoken language throughout, using the conditional tense to speculate on the effects of uneven wealth distribution. Two of the group, one with high prior attainment from time spent abroad, were quick to provide examples from the text and freely added their own comments and opinions. In another lesson the class could correctly identify and use the vocabulary to describe the key messages contained in a series of advertisements, although most needed prompting to develop their answers. Reading aloud was a little laboured and the GCE AS-level students in the class, though understanding well enough, spoke less confidently. Written work shows satisfactory progress likely to lead to above average standards by the time of the examination. One student especially has a secure grasp of tense, case endings and inversion and writes freely, for instance, on censorship of the Internet. Other work is still marred by loose verb placement and inconsistent agreements, but shows more ambition and awareness of logical argument than at the beginning of the year.
315. Achievement varies according to students previous experience of German. Whereas some are already very proficient speakers when they enter the sixth form and subsequently reach near bilingual fluency, others have been learning the language for fewer years than they have French, for example, and do not have the same depth of grammatical knowledge or breadth of vocabulary and expression. Although IB higher level and, when appropriate, AS and A-level students receive additional lessons and teachers plan as well as they can for the range of need, the provision of only one class in each year is unsatisfactory. Some students need more dedicated time to consolidate prior and new work if they are to reach average standards. Given these difficulties, most students achieve as expected, and well in understanding and speaking.
316. Teaching is good and ensures that students use available time well. Teachers build on high levels of interest and motivation through their excellent command and use of spoken German and well-chosen tape and text extracts. Lessons are carefully planned so that, where possible, all students of different attainment levels and oral confidence are able to contribute. Tasks are interesting and help develop skills of independent and collaborative learning. Students are challenged to think for themselves in considering a wide variety of social and moral issues. Constructive relationships contribute to an atmosphere in which students feel they can take risks when exploring new topics and extending their own knowledge. Marking and assessment are usually thorough. The use of examination criteria and comments keeps students well informed of their standards and how to improve, although, as in French, comments are sometimes too brief and lack depth of analysis. Both standard and higher level students in Year 12 need more individual support in learning to write extensively.



317. Improvement since the last inspection, in both provision and standards, has been good. The subject prospers under creative leadership and thorough curriculum planning and evaluation. Well-established links with Germany contribute significantly to the students' high oral standards and excellent personal development. Some students have attended intensive holiday courses, and all spend a period in Germany with an exchange partner. Plans are now in hand for work experience placements in Germany for Year 13 students. Students are exceptionally positive about their experience and very appreciative of teachers' work on their behalf.
318. Further attention needs to be given to raising standards of written work to that of the best and to arrangements for grouping students of diverse backgrounds and aspirations. The argument of economic viability needs to be balanced with that of ensuring that each student is enabled to progress as much as possible.