

INSPECTION REPORT

THE PHILIP MORANT SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

Colchester, Essex.

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115320

Headteacher: Mr Russell Moon

Reporting inspector: Mr Michael Newton
2494

Dates of inspection: 26th - 30th March 2001

Inspection number: 188441

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Rembrandt Way Colchester Essex
Postcode:	CO3 4QS
Telephone number:	01206 545222
Fax number:	01206 244000
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. G. Davison
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
2494	Michael Newton	<i>Registered inspector</i>
19677	Marion Cumbers	<i>Lay inspector</i>
7084	Jack Haslam	<i>Team inspector</i>
27585	Kenneth Hounslow	<i>Team Inspectors</i>
24127	James Kidd	<i>Team inspector</i>
1723	Michael Milton	<i>Team Inspector</i>

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
Battersea,
LONDON
SW11 3AD*

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

The Philip Morant School and College is a large comprehensive school with 1622 students aged 11 to 19. It is a foundation school with Technology College and Beacon School status. There are more boys than girls. There are 213 Sixth Form students in the college. The demand for places in the school is high, with over 480 applying for 280 places annually. It has strong links with the five primary schools in the locality in keeping with its aim to provide each student 'with the highest quality education and care in a world class school at the heart of the community'.

The neighbourhood from which it draws its students is generally well favoured socially, economically and educationally. There are only a few students from ethnic minorities none of whom need special language support. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals (6.5 per cent) is below the national average (17.8 per cent); so too is the proportion of students on the special needs register (12 per cent compared with 19.3 per cent nationally). The school has specialist provision for 15 students with hearing impairment.

Overall, attainment on entry is above the national average. Although students of all levels of attainment are represented in the school, there are slightly more students of average and above average ability than those below.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE IS

Philip Morant is an outstanding comprehensive school and college with many excellent features and no significant weaknesses. The quality of teaching is very high. The monitoring of academic progress is exceptional. Leadership is highly focussed on improving standards and teaching. As a result, students achieve excellent results in National Curriculum tests at age 14 and in GCSE examinations at age 16. The pass rate at GCE A Level is above the national average and, as in the school generally, significant value is added to students' prior attainment.

Students benefit from a range of initiatives, particularly in the use of new technologies that enhance their learning. An excellent house system makes a significant contribution to student's personal development. In the light of its effectiveness Philip Morant offers very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE DOES WELL

- Achieves outstanding results in national tests at 14 and GCSE examination at 16.
- provides very high quality teaching for its students;
- rigorously monitors students' academic progress and provides excellent support and guidance;
- benefits from very effective leadership and management at all levels;
- is in the forefront of developing the use of the latest technology to help students learn;
- provides excellent opportunities for students to develop personal responsibility;
- offers a very good range of learning opportunities and excellent facilities Post 16.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school should build upon good practice in these areas:

- the quality of marking - raising it to a consistently high level in order to help students improve further;
- the quality of teaching - developing it further to the level of the very best in all lessons;
- the level of understanding of the distinctive nature of the assessment and marking processes used in the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection the school has grown in size. Philip Morant College is now well established, with over 200 students benefiting from new, attractive and well-resourced accommodation. The school and college are now highly regarded.

The quality of teaching and learning have significantly improved and standards have risen, producing results at GCSE that are in the top 5 per cent of similar schools nationally. In 1996 the National Curriculum requirements for information technology needed to be fully implemented. Students now benefit from information and communication technology in many aspects of their learning. Following the last inspection the school appointed a member of staff to co-ordinate work for able and gifted students. The needs of these students are now appropriately catered for. The in-house modular courses criticised in the last report have been replaced by nationally recognised vocational courses. The school also addressed the issue of providing more information to parents about its curriculum, but parents' expectations are high and the school has not totally satisfied all parents in seeking to improve communication. There is a strong commitment to continue to improve in all areas of the school and college.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*
A Levels/AS Levels	D	B	C	n/a

Key

excellent A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

As a result of its outstanding academic achievements, Philip Morant has recently been selected for a government School Achievement Award for Excellence. Students make good progress during Key Stage 3 so that at 14, they achieve results in English, mathematics and science that are well above the national average. This applies to the number of those achieving Level 5 or above and those achieving Level 6 and above. In mathematics the results are in the top 5 per cent when compared to similar schools nationally. Students continue to make good progress through Key Stage 4, so that in GCSE results in 2000 the school exceeded its target of 75 per cent, with 77 per cent of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades and an average point score across the year group of 51. On both these indicators the school is in the top 5 per cent of similar schools. At this key stage the school is improving at a faster rate than schools nationally. Students in the college taking two or more A/AS Level GCE examinations achieved passes in 2000 above the national average. The A Level results are consistently well above predictions based on students' GCSE results. The grading in the above table reflects the fact that the nature of the intake into the college varies from year to year.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have an excellent attitude to their work and to the school and college in general. Participation rates in activities are high.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall very good. Limited space leads to some minor incidents, and a small minority of students display challenging behaviour at times. There are no permanent exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Students confidently take on responsibility, many through the house system. There is a high level of mutual respect and relationships are excellent.
Attendance	This is well above the national average and has been for some years. The great majority of students positively enjoy coming to school.

The ethos of Philip Morant is caring and challenging. In this atmosphere students develop in maturity. This is a major factor in enabling them to achieve high standards. This attitude is fostered by the care and respect the school shows for the individual and by the opportunities it provides for students to take responsibility; particularly for their own learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall and better than in most schools. There are no significant weaknesses. Teaching is excellent in 14 per cent of lessons and very good in 24 per cent. In 84 per cent of lessons it is good or better. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons of the highest quality were seen more frequently in Key Stage 3 and in the Sixth Form than in Key Stage 4. In English, two thirds of all lessons are good and a third are very good or excellent. In mathematics, half the lessons are good and half are very good or excellent. Students are competent with number, and teachers' excellent planning develops students' learning. In science, the teaching in half the lessons is very good or excellent, and in the remainder it is nearly always good. As with other subjects, the significant strength in the teaching is the careful planning to meet the clear objectives set. Students are actively involved in their learning, and the needs of all students are carefully met, particularly those with special educational needs and those with hearing impairment. The teaching of literacy and number skills is good overall across the curriculum. In spite of its strengths, there is scope to bring all teaching to the level of the best.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good for all ages and abilities. Strong links with primary schools ensures progression in learning from Year 6. Meets statutory requirements except that currently religious education does not have sufficient time allocated in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good overall, both for those with hearing impairment and those with learning difficulties. Accommodation for the latter is currently inadequate. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are also very well supported.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Spiritual development good - discrete opportunities are in the process of being identified. Very good provision for students' moral and social needs. Now a good range of multi-cultural experiences compared with the last inspection. Provision for cultural development is at least good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent pastoral arrangements provide the utmost support for students. The house system is a strong feature and is most effective in recognising, monitoring and celebrating achievements in all areas of school life.

At all stages the school successfully provides a broad and balanced curriculum which, on the one hand, meets statutory requirements and, on the other, reflects its Technology College status. Creative use of time enables the needs of differing ability groups to be met at both Key Stage 3 and 4. At Sixth Form level the college offers a good range of A Levels as well as vocational courses. The taught curriculum is enriched at all stages by many additional activities including strong links with business and the community. The rapidly developing website extends opportunities for learning further.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides positive and clear leadership with a strong focus on student achievement. He is ably supported by a highly professional and motivated leadership team. There is strong leadership at all levels.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very supportive and are actively involved with staff on school development. Their committee structure works well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. There is a strong focus on self evaluation and improvement at all levels. It is reflective and innovative and makes excellent use of data.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The principles of best value are well imbedded in the culture of the school. The aims and values of the school are evident at

	every level and all planning, including financial planning is aimed at achieving clear targets.
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This is a large organisation that is very well managed at all levels. There are clear roles and responsibilities and a tangible culture of commitment and care. Lines of communication and accountability are clear. It systematically reviews, reflects and reforms, and is relentless in its desire to improve. It also gives students the opportunity of active involvement in the management of the school, through the school council, student management team and the college student association.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children are making good progress. • That teaching is of a high quality. • That the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That students are given the right amount of work to do at home. • To be kept better informed about how their children are getting on. • That the school should work more closely with parents.

Inspection evidence shows that the amount of homework set is generally pitched at an appropriate level for each year group. Some homework is very well integrated into students' learning and makes a valuable contribution to progress. The school's website currently provides additional learning resources.

The school is seeking to improve links with parents through, for example, the forum group and questionnaires, but is aware that not all aspirations can be easily achieved. Parents have easy access to the school so that concerns about individual students can be addressed. All contact is meticulously logged by house heads and dealt with as soon as possible.

Inspectors do recognise that the reporting to parents about how well their child is achieving at school is not always clear and this issue is addressed in the key issues for action.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE DOES WELL

Achieves outstanding results in national tests at 14 and GCSE examination at 16

1. As a result of its outstanding academic achievements, the school has recently been selected for a government School Achievement Award for Excellence. Since the last inspection the school's performance in national tests at 14 in English, mathematics and science has been consistently well above the national average. In 2000, on the three national indicators of the percentage achieving Level 5 and above, the percentage achieving Level 6 and above, and the average point score achieved by students, the school was ranked in the top 25 per cent of all schools nationally. Some differences emerge between the three subjects when results are compared with those of similar schools. In mathematics, results of those achieving Level 6 and above are in the top 5 per cent when compared to those of similar schools, science results are in the top 25 per cent, and English in the top 40 per cent. Overall, based on average point scores, results remain in the top 25 per cent of similar schools. Data collected and analysed by the local education authority indicate that the school is adding more value from Key Stage 2 than any other similar school in Essex.

2. Teachers' assessments in other non-core subjects are also well above the national average. Results in history, geography, design and technology, information technology and art show that the percentage of students attaining Level 5 or above is generally about 25 percentage points above the national average. In music, modern foreign languages and physical education, results are in line with national averages.

3. All results are analysed in detail in order to set targets for individual subjects and also to inform whole-school developments. For example, whereas national benchmarks are concerned with the percentage of students achieving Level 6 and above, the school's analysis breaks this down into numbers achieving Levels 7 and 8 and above, in order to target achievement more precisely.

4. Students continue to make good progress through Key Stage 4, so that in GCSE results in 2000, 77 per cent of students achieved 5 or more A* to C grades, with an average point score across the year group of 51. On both these indicators the school is in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally and the top 5 per cent when compared with similar schools. These two indicators also rank the school 23rd out of 550 specialist schools nationally. When compared with schools that had similar Key Stage 3 results in 1998, progress is good, but more needs to be done to bring the school into the top 25 per cent.

5. The trend in GCSE results based on average point scores is above the national average. A further impressive feature of the results contributing to this trend is the fact that in fourteen subjects candidates achieved over 70 per cent A* to C grades. With the exception of German, the percentage achieving A* to C grades was above the national average. Detailed analysis of subject results is undertaken annually, and the outcome used to review teachers' practice and set targets. The school has well proven indicators to demonstrate the improvement it makes to students' achievement.

6. The percentages achieving five or more A*-G grades and those achieving at least one GCSE pass do not compare as favourably against any benchmark data. However, these results are consistently above the national average and the school is aware of the reasons for minor fluctuations year on year. The school maintains a strong inclusive policy and strives to ensure that students are entered for as many nationally accredited examinations as appropriate. Provision for the least motivated and often lower attaining students is under constant review in order to provide an alternative curriculum that fully satisfies their needs. Current students in this group are well supported, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Provides very high quality teaching for its students

7. The quality of teaching is outstanding and a major factor contributing to the rising standards of achievement. Over eight out of every ten lessons are good or better and nearly half of these are very good or excellent. These proportions indicate a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. At that time, only two out of ten were very good or excellent, and nearly seven out of every ten lessons good or better. Also, unlike the last inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection. The quality of teaching overall is considerably better than that found nationally.

8. Several factors have contributed to this improvement. Teaching and learning has a high profile in school development planning. The quality of teaching is rigorously monitored in a systematic way by line managers and senior staff. Good practice is regularly shared and there is an ongoing professional debate about teaching and learning. In addition, performance management is well supported by very good opportunities for teachers' professional development. For example, a link with Greenwich University enables teachers to study for a higher degree and there is on-site provision for ICT training. Also, the effective deployment of five advanced skilled teachers to support teaching initiatives across the school makes a valuable contribution.

9. Lessons of the highest quality were seen across a range of subjects. They were seen more frequently in Key Stage 3 and in the Sixth Form than at Key Stage 4. High expectation of students is a key characteristic of the best lessons. In these lessons, teachers plan carefully, question skilfully, and use a range of strategies to create pace and challenge which ensures good learning for students of all abilities. They use their own excellent knowledge and enthusiasm to motivate students to learn. For example, in a top set mathematics class in Year 7, a carefully sequenced lesson built on students' previous knowledge and understanding as they were introduced to algebraic equations. In a Year 13 history lesson, the teacher's skill, knowledge and enthusiasm enabled students to take an active part in a well structured discussion to consolidate their knowledge of Weimar Germany. A science teacher with a lower-attaining group in Year 7 had them hanging on his every word, and the lesson was full of timed tasks that reinforced learning on the neutralisation of acids and alkalis.

10. The teaching of English is always good or better. It is predominantly good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the Sixth Form. An excellent lesson in Year 9 with a lower attaining group incorporated all the best qualities. An atmosphere of industry was created as students were fully engaged in addressing challenging questions on the text they were studying. Overall, there is major

focus on developing students' literacy skills, which also helps them in subjects across the curriculum. The teaching of mathematics is also always good or better. Four out of ten lessons are very good or excellent. Teachers make effective use of their very good subject knowledge by giving clear explanations and guiding students' progress carefully. The quality of teaching in science is very good overall. The main strength is in teachers' use and management of a wide variety of materials and resources to move learning on.

11. There are now no significant general weaknesses in the teaching, but there is scope to improve upon current practice to raise the quality to the level of the best as indicated in a subsequent section of this report.

Rigorously monitors students' academic progress and provides excellent support and guidance

12. Procedures for monitoring students' academic and social development are excellent. This quality is achieved through the successful integration of both the academic structures and the impressive house system. The school places great emphasis on the care and development of the individual. The role of the form tutor is a seminal one in the development of students' self esteem and progress.

13. The school works hard to identify underachievement and to act upon a problem before it is too late. The school's improvement team, made up primarily of heads of faculty, has developed a long established and highly effective system of target setting and monitoring of academic performance. From a wide range of baseline data, teachers set challenging targets for their classes and for individual students. Performance is rigorously tracked against expectations and regularly reviewed. Interim assessments inform both teachers, students and parents about progress. They result in a review of classroom practice as well enabling teachers to support individuals in their learning.

14. Information from subject teachers comes together to enable form tutors to gain an overview of a students' performance and to set more generic targets. Heads of house, chair regular meetings to discuss students' progress on an individual basis. Moreover, the role of the house academic counsellor is crucial to the whole process. These teachers liaise with subject staff, talk to students where necessary, and report their findings to house meetings. Furthermore, the academic counsellors' work informs the assessment meetings between the headteacher and heads of house. These sessions generate a variety of letters of commendation and also of concern.

15. There is no doubt that teachers know their students very well, care deeply for their well being, and are concerned to make sure that all reach their potential. The data collected by the school is legion and enables teachers to have an accurate overview of how students are performing. It also informs whole school planning and targets setting.

16. The in-service training of staff for their pastoral, as well as their teaching, role is outstanding. The school organises joint academic/pastoral conferences, trains academic counsellors in their role, and also involves students in anti-bullying training. In particular, staff training on child protection is first class. Child protection is an item on the agenda of all in-service training days, and teachers new to the school are inducted into relevant child protection issues.

17. Students speak very highly of the care offered by the school and say that they feel very secure. They pay tribute to the sensitivity of their teachers and have the utmost confidence in approaching them when problems arise. They are also grateful for the work of older students, sometimes prefects, who act as 'bullying mentors' and who give of their time to help younger students experiencing difficulties. Bullying is not an issue in the school because in most cases differences are settled quickly and effectively.

18. The care shown towards students has a most positive effect and contributes significantly to the standards achieved. It produces young people who achieve well, are articulate, responsible, and have a real pride in their school.

Benefits from very effective leadership and management at all levels

19. The aims of the school are very explicit not only in its documentation but in the day-to-day life of the school. Throughout the organisation, adults and students strive to achieve their best to ensure that Philip Morant provides each student 'with the highest quality education and care in a world class school at the heart of the community'.

20. The governors discharge their responsibilities very well and provide clear direction through their strategic planning. As the school grows in popularity and the demand for places increases, the governors are having to review their admissions policy to ensure that there are sufficient places for pupils from neighbourhood primary schools with whom the school works so productively. The task is daunting but is being met with care and determination. It is currently being addressed in the wider context of a longer-term vision for the school and college and its site.

21. The headteacher, who was appointed in 1998, is highly focussed on improvement. He is passionate about students reaching their potential and has set up structures to help ensure that this is achieved. There are clear lines of delegation and accountability in the school and college, and communication structures are excellent. He himself maintains a high profile about the school, and students clearly respect his approachability. His positive and encouraging manner is infectious and contributes to the overall positive ethos in the school.

22. The strategic leadership team work effectively together. Its members have very distinct responsibilities, which they discharge with high levels of professionalism, and they have a clear focus on the overall quality of provision. The team was reorganised at the beginning of this academic year and now includes three deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers and a director of finance and administration. They are working to precise targets which are to be reviewed this summer.

23. Each member of the leadership team provides effective leadership of the groups of staff for which he or she has responsibility. This is also true of heads of house and heads of faculty. During the inspection, whenever teachers holding responsibilities were interviewed, or team meetings were observed, three characteristics were evident: the high level commitment to improvement, the level of care for students' success, and the awareness of the related work of others. Roles and responsibilities are always clear and the level of communication very good. The integration of pastoral and academic responsibilities is particularly impressive and has a significant impact on the success of individual students.

24. The leadership, management and commitment of support staff is of an equally high quality and results in an efficiently run school and college. The size and limited accommodation of the school means that the sheer logistics of enabling the routines to operate well require good communication and team work. This is particularly evident in the use of the school hall, which has a treble function on a daily basis. The new administrative centre is well managed, giving excellent service to visitors, students and staff. Learning and behaviour support staff, librarians, laboratory and ICT technicians, and the site team, all play a positive part in the success of the school.

Is in the forefront of developing the use of the latest technology to help students learn

25. In 1996, a key issue for action from the previous inspection was to ensure that the National Curriculum requirements for ICT were fully implemented. The school has made excellent progress with this key issue for action.

26. The school has taken advantage of the resources and status as a Technology College to develop on a number of fronts. It now provides all Key Stage 3 students with one lesson of ICT per week. These lessons build on those the school provides for the Year 6 pupils in its main feeder schools. A scheme of work for Years 6 and 7 ensures continuity, and this scheme is changed as standards rise. They are currently well above average. At the end of each unit of work, students' progress in the National Curriculum is monitored, through the use of a well-structured recording sheet. However, the co-ordinator does not have the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching, which, given the large number of teachers involved, would help ensure high quality and greater consistency.

27. At Key Stage 4 all students take either a short or a full GCSE qualification. The GCSE results in ICT have improved over the last two years, and in 2000 nearly two thirds of students achieved A*-C grades, which is well above national averages. The current Year 10 students started a GCSE course when they were in Year 9 and will take the examination later this summer. The school is in the process of changing the examination course, so that current Year 9 students are following a GNVQ course which should allow them to achieve the equivalent of two GCSEs.

28. At Sixth Form level, students have opportunity to study an A Level course in computer studies, and a vocational CISCO course. The A Level results are above national averages, and the students following the CISCO course are successful.

29. Information and communication technology is widely used by all subjects to enhance students' learning. In mathematics, all teachers use PowerPoint presentations as part of their teaching. In science, a wide range of computer applications is used, including research from CD-ROMs and simulations of scientific principles such as waves. There is also some data logging, but the school is obtaining improved resources to develop this further. In GCSE geography, students word process their coursework and are encouraged to use relevant websites on the River Nile and Aswan Dam. In music, in a Year 8 lesson, very good learning was observed as students worked with keyboards linked to computers. The design and technology department makes extensive use of computer-aided design and manufacture.

30. There are now 11 rooms in the school and college with networks of personal computers, and students frequently use these as part of lessons and for their own homework and research. The school has worked in partnership with industry to develop innovative ICT products designed to improve learning. For example, the use of palm top computers by Sixth Formers and staff, and the use of interactive assessment as part of on-line learning. It is an established CISCO Academy that is also open to adults for two evenings each week. It is also a centre for providing ICT training for staff from fourteen neighbouring schools.

31. The school has made excellent progress in establishing and developing its interactive website for the school and local 'family' of schools. The content of this very well designed website includes learning resources and activities for all students in a range of subjects to use at school or from home. For example, there is a range of mathematics resources on the site, including good materials for learning and assessing basic numeracy skills. For A Level computing, teachers have written eighteen programs to help students understand key concepts. These programs are given to students on a CD-ROM or are available from the site. The site provides links to over 500 selected websites that the school has identified as providing worthwhile curriculum materials. For each subject the website provides information about what is taught in Year 7 and 8, together with relevant activities and resources. For example, mapwork skills are taught in Year 7 geography and students can select from three tasks, each of which is linked to another website. The school has a target to produce similar resources for Year 9. For Year 11 students the site provides revision aids, including links to websites such as the BBC. The school's aim is to further develop the site as a supportive curriculum resource and to create a virtual library for student and community use.

32. In a recent survey, 92 per cent of students were found to have a computer at home, and 72 per cent of these computers are linked to the Internet. To support students without Internet access at home, a computer room is available for one hour after school for four evenings.

Provides excellent opportunities for students to develop personal responsibility

33. One of the great strengths of Philip Morant is its ability to combine a rigorous approach to academic achievement with very good opportunities for personal development. In particular, the opportunities for students to exercise responsibility are excellent. Many of these arise from the very effective house system, which breaks the school into five manageable units.

34. Within the house system students are able to take an active role in contributing to school issues, through, for example, a school council, and are able to take part in numerous inter-house competitions. There are annual charity appeals, organised through the house system, and students are responsible for leading and delivering each initiative. Older students are involved in selecting prefects and ultimately interviewing for head boy and head girl. During the inspection this latter process was observed, and the level of professionalism was impressive. Challenging and perceptive questions were asked of candidates in a sensitive and supportive manner.

35. In each area of responsibility the school places a high level of trust in its students. For example, in the school's charity work students are trusted to handle quite large sums of money and they play a major part in deciding how that money is allocated. There is senior prefects' management team which carries full responsibility for managing prefect rotas as well as organising the school council. As with staff, lines of accountability are clear and adequate support is available.

36. Of equal importance is the way in which this development of responsibility is carried into the learning. Reference has already been made to the impact of ICT developments on learning, and it is evident that this is an area being further developed. On several occasions during the inspection, including at least two assemblies, reference was made publicly to the virtual library being built up through the school's website. In addition, one of the excellent features of the best teaching was the opportunity given to students to work independently on tasks and then share their findings with others. Similarly, the best quality homework placed demands on students which develop their capacity for independent study. A group of Year 11 students spoke of the use currently being made of the website to help their revision programme for GCSE.

37. In all these areas there is clearly room for further improvement but excellent structures and opportunities are being created. Students respond positively to the challenges the school offers, and this is a major factor in contributing to high standards and personal development.

Offers a very good range of learning opportunities and excellent facilities, Post 16

38. The college is in a highly competitive post-16 environment, but it has established itself as a very creditable provider. It offers a broad and balanced curriculum which enables students to study A Level subjects, vocational qualifications or a mix of both. Students have access to 26 A Level and vocational A Level courses. As well as the traditional A Level courses, it offers law, media studies, performance studies, psychology and sociology. In addition, the college is a recognised CICSO Academy and students are able to choose the CISCOS course, which is a vocational course for the development of computer networks.

39. Many students follow a well taught general studies course and sit the AS Level examination in Year 12 and some the A Level in Year 13. All students follow enrichment courses which are selected from a wide range of options, including photography, art, pre-teaching, sports leadership and Young Enterprise. In addition, students have opportunity to be involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include Duke of Edinburgh's Award, public speaking, helping in classes in the main school, in subjects such as science, drama and physical education, and giving support in the local primary schools.

40. There are some very good links with outside organisations, which contribute significantly to students' learning. For example, art students benefit from using studio space in a professional gallery. The cast and crew of the college production of *Antigone* received training and feedback on their performances from members of the local theatre. As part of activities week, Year 12 students investigated life in Colchester in 2010 and visited a wide range of organisations and people as part of their research. At the end of the project, they gave a PowerPoint presentation to an audience that included local councillors and business leaders. Through links with Essex University, science students visit university laboratories, and lecturers speak to mathematics and science students at the college. Small groups of students have visited India and Bolivia. For the last four years, small groups of students have attended European study weeks in Belgium, where they work with students from other European countries. This is an exceptionally good range of opportunities, but in addition the governors have invested in the development of Sixth Form facilities which enhance learning, widen opportunities, and provide for good social interaction. A purpose-built Sixth Form block, first opened in 1996, offers very good facilities. These include a library with a full time specialist librarian, a computer suite, and a fully equipped and staffed café.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Raising the quality of marking to a consistently high level in order to help students improve further

41. The school has a clear marking policy for Key Stage 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3 it is based on an A-D scale, with a descriptor for each letter to indicate the level of attainment reached. At Key Stage 4 grades either relate to this criterion or to GCSE levels of attainment. Students interviewed during the inspection were generally clear about the use of this scheme and confirmed that this is applied consistently across subjects.

42. There was, as always during inspection, a focus on the scrutiny of work. A pre-selected sample of work in the core subjects was scrutinised, and many books were seen during the course of lesson observations. The concern of inspectors in respect of marking is the inconsistency in its quality, the general lack of follow up, and the extent to which the marking fails to relate to National Curriculum criteria at Key Stage 3.

43. The extent to which marking diagnoses and identifies areas for improvement, varies from Key Stage 3 to 4. Overall marking at Key Stage 4 is at least good and often very good. Where the work is marked in relation to GCSE criteria, it is analytical and students generally receive helpful comments on how to improve. In English, for example, draft coursework is marked in detail with very full diagnostic comments. As in Key Stage 3, assessment records which include students' self-assessment are kept in their folders. Similarly in science, mathematics, design and technology, and geography, the quality of marking is much more developmental in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3.

44. At Key Stage 3, marking can vary from very good to unsatisfactory. In modern foreign languages, for example, marking ranges from cursory ticks, through summative comments, to some very extensive and diagnostic feedback. In science the policy is adhered to but there is lot of

superficial marking, and there are very few examples of comments that help students know what they need to do to improve. Comments such as 'Finish this' appear never to be followed up. In mathematics, work is marked regularly with grades and encouraging comments but little advice. There is little evidence that corrections are followed up. A similar picture emerges in design and technology and geography.

45. Overall, practice in English is better at both key stages. Work is fully marked; spelling and grammatical errors are corrected where appropriate and comments are more diagnostic, particularly at Key Stage 4. There is evidence, too, of follow up where corrections are expected or advice given. A further feature of the English marking is the use of National Curriculum criteria which give students and their parents a clear indication of the level they are aspiring to. Students also receive good advice on how to make progress, particularly in reading, through assessment sheets which are kept in their folders.

46. Also of concern to some parents and students, is the fact that work is not always marked promptly. This results in students becoming disheartened and sometimes misunderstandings about a topic persist for too long and learning is affected.

Developing further the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons to the level of the very best

47. The quality of teaching overall is very good, and there are no general weaknesses. The specific strengths of the teaching have been highlighted earlier in the report. However, this is a school which is self-evaluative and constantly seeking to improve, and the current development plan includes improvement in teaching and learning. In the light of this, there are two features that could be improved in some otherwise satisfactory and good lessons.

48. Marking has already been identified as one issue where greater consistency could improve learning. A further relatively significant issue is the lack of sufficient challenge in some lessons. Where the lesson is not pitched appropriately, some students - often boys - lose interest and go off task, with the inevitable consequence that their behaviour is not as good as it should be. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher failed to time tasks appropriately and some students lost interest as a result. In a Year 10 lesson control became difficult at times because the pace of learning dropped at various points and interest had to be regained. In a Year 7 lesson, the resources were not adequate for the task which had been set. The result was that the lesson lost pace and challenge for some students, who became noticeably bored.

49. Learning was unsatisfactory in another Year 8 lesson where the tasks set were inappropriate for the group. A combination of lack of relevance and lack of understanding contributed to poor behaviour. The quality of learning was also restricted in two other Key Stage 3 lessons where the teachers failed to build adequately on previous learning. In one case this was because questioning was not sufficiently persistent and challenging.

50. This issue of challenge links two current 'ambitions' expressed in the school development plan. The first is to use an audit of learning styles to help teachers develop a more appropriate range of

teaching strategies that will improve the quality of learning. The second is to improve behaviour in lessons. Evidence from inspection suggests that these two

issues are linked. Where teachers had a better awareness of students' learning needs there was a greater level of challenge. Where lessons are challenging students are less likely to lose interest and be distracted. The best lessons identified earlier in the report serve to illustrate these points.

Ensuring that everyone understands the distinctive nature of the assessment and marking processes used in the school

51. As the analysis of parents' responses indicates, nearly a quarter of respondents were unhappy with the level of information they receive about how well their child is achieving at school. Evidence from the parents' meeting, and from additional comments on the response forms, indicates that the one area in need of clarification is the distinctive nature of the marking, assessment and reporting procedures currently in operation in the school. School staff and the governors are aware of these misunderstandings, and attempts have been made to clarify the processes but without complete success.

52. The school has a comprehensive assessment, recording and reporting policy with many very good features which help ensure that students make progress. Guidance to staff on each component identifies some very good practice. Within this policy there is reference to the 'Whole School Marking Policy' referred to earlier in this report. This is applied primarily to the work of students in Key Stage 3, although it could also apply to some work in Key Stage 4. There is in the policy a tendency to use the terms marking and assessment synonymously, with the effect that the distinction between day-to-day marking and overall assessment is not always made clear. Misunderstandings among students and their parents arise as a result of this lack of clarity. To reach an overall assessment, some teachers set specific assessment tasks. Although these tasks are marked on the same scale as other work (A-D), the criteria upon which grades are allocated are quite different from those used for regular marking. In these cases work is graded in relation to performance within the teaching group, so that teachers can identify weaknesses in knowledge and understanding and deal with any under-performance. This arrangement is, therefore, fundamental to the very successful monitoring arrangements that help raise standards. However, these grades can come as a shock to students and parents when they seem so different in level from regular marks. This is notably the case if there has been no evidence within that marking that a student was struggling with a particular aspect of a subject.

53. There is also potential for confusion at the reporting stage. Parents receive one full report each year in line with statutory requirements. They also receive an interim report during a school year. They have opportunity to respond to these reports by arranging a personal interview with a member of staff. In addition, they are able to talk to a range of subject teachers at a formal consultation meeting, arranged for the term in which they do not receive a written report.

54. Overall, parents are well provided for in terms of having access to information about their child's progress. However, the written reports have two weaknesses. Firstly, not all subjects in the full report make clear the National Curriculum level to which either the group or the individual pupil is aspiring. This means that the assessment grades, which reflect the

pupil's attainment within that group, cannot be seen in context. Secondly, the interim report simply provides the assessment information. It fails to give parents that crucial piece of information they are wanting, which is to know how their child is achieving in relation to national standards.

55. In summary, there are three areas leading to potential confusion and dissatisfaction: a lack of clarity in the terminology of the school policy; the use of the same grades for two distinct activities; and a lack of a national context against which parents can judge attainment. There is a call for marking to be more diagnostic at Key Stage 3 and to relate more closely to National Curriculum criteria. Teachers need to be clear about the criteria to be used for marking any regular testing, and to set in a proper context any grades reported to parents.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. To improve further the current high quality and standards in the school, the governors and senior staff should take the following actions:

- **Raise the quality of marking to a consistently high level in order to help students improve further, by:**
 - * making better use of National Curriculum criteria for the marking of work at Key Stage 3;
 - * sharing good practice in diagnostic marking;
 - * improving guidance on the frequency and nature of written feedback;
 - * monitoring more rigorously the quality of marking.

- **Develop further the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons to the level of the very best, by:**
 - * successfully meeting 'Ambition' Two, Targets 1 & 2 of the current school development plan relating to learning;
 - * continuing to share good practice in teaching;
 - * continuing to use performance management to improve the quality of teaching.

- **Ensure that everyone understands the distinctive nature of the assessment and marking processes used in the school by:**
 - * reviewing the school's assessment policy to ensure clarity of terms;
 - * ensuring a clear distinction between day-to-day marking and overall assessment;
 - * making sure that all reporting to parents indicates clearly the National Curriculum level at which students are attaining or to which they are aspiring.

SIXTH FORM PROVISION

57. The Sixth Form was established as the Philip Morant College in 1996. A purpose-built block provides excellent facilities, namely a dedicated library with specialist librarian, a computer suite, and a fully equipped and staffed café. The college opened with 86 students and has grown each year. Currently there are 213 students following A Level and Advanced GNVQ courses.

58. The college provides a broad and balanced curriculum and students have access to a wide range of courses. All students follow enrichment courses, which are selected from a wide range of options. In addition to the formal curriculum, students have opportunity to be involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include Duke of Edinburgh's Award, public speaking, and classroom support. There are also some very good links with outside organisations, both locally and internationally, which contribute significantly to students' learning.

59. The overall attainment profile of students entering the college is different from that of students in the main school. The college is in a highly competitive environment, and at the age of 16 there is significant movement of students between Post 16 establishments in the area. The profile therefore fluctuates from year to year. In 2000 and 2001, attainment on entry was a little below national averages, although it included some students who were well above. There is a nationally recognised system which uses students' GCSE results to make predictions of the A Level results they are likely to obtain. In the past two years, the college's overall results have exceeded these predictions, and it has clearly added value to students' results. More than half of the students move from the college into higher education.

60. In the 2000 examinations, the results of students taking fewer than two A or AS Levels were below national averages, while the results of those taking more than two A or AS Levels were above average. The overall A Level pass rate was 94 per cent, which is above the national average of 89 per cent. The results of students taking Advanced GNVQ courses were above national averages. Perhaps of more significance, when account is taken of the fact that the entry profile to the college is different from that to the school, is that results are well above the predictions based on students' GCSE results. Overall, when account is taken of the average point score students achieve, they are in line with other students nationally.

61. The college uses students' GCSE results to identify a predicted minimum grade but does not regard this as a ceiling. A potential estimated grade is also identified. These grades are used as the basis for the ongoing monitoring of students' progress, and where this falls below the expected standards, steps are taken with both the students and subject teachers to identify and remedy any problems. The college has a very effective system for monitoring the progress of individual students and uses this information to help improve standards of attainment. The college's current analysis shows that girls achieve better A Level results than boys. A number of steps have been taken which should give more effective support to boys. The college is involved in a project for raising standards in Sixth Forms, and a member of staff has carried out some relevant research to help develop strategies. Students know the standards they should be working at. They consider that their teachers know them well and give them strong personal support.

62. Each student is a member of a tutorial group. Students have regular individual meetings with their tutors every three or four week. Students find these meetings helpful in reviewing weaker areas of their work and setting targets for improvement. There are also regular formal reviews of students' progress throughout their time in the college. For example, there are five formal progress reviews during Year 12. Tutors contact parents if they have particular concerns and if there are particular achievements to celebrate.

63. The leadership and management of the college has been very effective since 1996, as a thriving Sixth Form has been established from scratch. The college leadership and management group work closely as a team, and have established a very positive ethos and strong sense of community. The clear focus is to raise students' standards of achievement and improve the quality of education the students receive. All students are valued by staff, and there are clear systems to enable each student to achieve the highest possible standards. In addition, there is a commitment to providing students with a broad curriculum enriched by a wide variety of activities.

64. In order to support a relatively large number of small teaching groups, the school currently allocates slightly more resources to the Sixth Form than the income it receives for the number of Post 16 students. However, college numbers are still growing. The college provides students with a broad curriculum. The very good teaching and high quality of care for students result in them making good progress and achieving better A Level results than those expected on a basis of their GCSE results. There is a high level of retention. As a result of all these strengths, the college provides very good value for money.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	24	46	16	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1409	213
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	92	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	172	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.55

National comparative data	7.7
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	157	125	282

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	118	136	131
	Girls	107	99	101
	Total	225	235	232
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	80 (84)	83 (87)	83 (78)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	38 (48)	67(66)	53 (48)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	128	140	128
	Girls	112	107	110
	Total	240	247	238
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	85 (87)	88 (87)	85 (92)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	51(55)	71 (62)	58 (63)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	140	139	279

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	99	133	137
	Girls	117	134	135
	Total	216	267	272
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	77 (73)	96 (98)	97 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	50.7 (47.8)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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	School	44	75
	National	N/A	N/A

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	54	65	119

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
School	14.9	19.8	17.1 (18.2)	1.9	2.3	2.1 (1.6)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	3
Indian	18
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	3
White	1574
Any other minority ethnic group	18

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	1	0
Chinese	0	0
White	86	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)	100.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:**Y7 - Y11**

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	762

Deployment of teachers:**Y7 - Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.5
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Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	4441322.00
Total expenditure	4336329.00
Expenditure per pupil	2684.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	162690.00
Balance carried forward to next year	267683.00

**Average teaching group size:
Y7 - Y11**

Key Stage 3	27.7
Key Stage 4	20.7

Results of the survey of parents and carers

QUESTIONNAIRE RETURN RATE

Number of questionnaires sent out	1614
Number of questionnaires returned	1058

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	53	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	53	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	58	10	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	52	18	5	2
The teaching is good.	33	58	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	46	18	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	45	9	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents	24	49	19	5	3
The school is well led and managed	29	53	9	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	53	8	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	48	6	2	8

Other issues raised by parents

Responses are overwhelmingly positive but on three aspects nearly a quarter of all respondents express reservations. Views expressed by the 51 parents present at the Parents' Meeting and the hundred or so additional comments on the response form help to clarify those concerns. In respect of homework the main concerns were either to do with inconsistency in the setting of homework or in the quantity in relation to stated expectations. Inspectors did find inconsistencies in both areas

and also in the recording of homework in logbooks but overall considered that the amount of work set was, on balance, about right. The growing use of the school web site provides adequate additional material for work to be done at home, for Years 7, 8 and 11. The dominant issue arising from the other two concerns related to marking, assessment and reporting and these are addressed in the report.