

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SOAR VALLEY COLLEGE**

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester City

Unique reference number: 120286

Principal: Mr Brian Glover

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones  
2918

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 189476  
Full 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:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Gleneagles Avenue Leicester
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Manjit Chohan
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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9163	Geoffrey Humphrey	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the college care for its students? How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
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3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector	Science	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	
22524	Sylvia Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
20479	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History	
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information communication technology (ICT)	
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern languages	
19532	Elizabeth Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	

3943	Donald Innes	Team inspector	Physical education	
22695	Ray Cardinal	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	
27485	Mark Sims	Team inspector	English as an additional language	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Soar Valley College is a community comprehensive school in the City of Leicester. The college is full. It is bigger than most secondary schools with 1211 students on roll; the numbers of boys and girls are similar. During the last year, the numbers of students leaving or joining the college amounted to about one class. Four fifths of the students are of Indian origin, many of whom are fourth generation British Asians. The biggest minority group in the school is white and there are small numbers from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. A quarter of the students for whom English is an additional language receive language support; 26 students, about two per cent, are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion with the highest level of need. About a fifth of these students has a special need related to behaviour; the majority has learning difficulties and a very small number has a physical impairment. When students join the college, their attainment overall is below average. While they are drawn from areas which have higher levels of disadvantage than is usual nationally, the numbers eligible for free school meals are broadly average. The college has projects funded by Excellence in Cities (EiC) and is working towards gaining specialist status as a technology college. The inspection included a focused evaluation of the school's strategies to support the achievement of boys.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. Students are achieving well because they have good attitudes to their work and receive good teaching. Very good leadership and management are ensuring that the college improves well. The value for money is good.

#### **What the school does well**

- Very good relationships between students and staff
- Attendance is very good
- Strong leadership and management
- Very good GCSE results in drama, English literature, mathematics, French, community languages and religious education
- Teaching and learning are good
- Students behave well and have good attitudes to school
- The college's care for its students is good
- Student's personal development is well provided for

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

- Unsatisfactory accommodation for English, design and technology, modern languages, physical education, and the library limits students' learning
- Assessment arrangements in music are unsatisfactory; in science, design and technology and language support, students' grades and results are not scrutinised to check on progress and staff planning

- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses
- Although generally well informed by the college, parents are not kept sufficiently up to date about each new development
- Dog-fouling of the playing fields is a health and safety hazard for students.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in 1996. Improvement is good. There is significant improvement in teaching. The majority of subject departments have made good progress, although in music this is unsatisfactory, particularly in relation to assessment; the college has been unable to make a specialist appointment of a music teacher. Progress on all seven key issues identified last time is at least satisfactory except on the aspect of worship; on four issues the progress is good, particularly on the quality of planning, monitoring and evaluation in departments. Although above average standards were not sustained by 2000, the 2001 GCSE results are above the national figures for 2000. Students' achievement remains good.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	B	D	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

- Overall results in Year 9 tests in 2000 were average compared with all schools and average compared with similar schools
- The strength was in mathematics results which were well above average in comparison to similar schools
- English results were below average in comparison to similar schools
- Up to 2000, the trend in results reflects the national trend
- In 2001, provisional results show a rise in each subject and a notable rise in English
- Overall GCSE results in 2000 were adversely affected by poor performance in design and technology and science, and the unusually low entry in English literature
- The proportion of higher grades gained in drama, English literature, mathematics, French, community languages and religious education in 2000 was particularly good
- Up to 2000, the trend in results was below the national trend so that the gap between college results and national results widened
- GCSE results in 2001 show good improvement; this includes design and technology
- The GCSE targets for 2001 were met



- Overall, in the work seen, standards are above average in mathematics, art and design, modern languages and religious education
- Standards overall are below average in the work seen in design and technology
- Students' achievement is good overall in all subjects except design and technology and music, where it is satisfactory, and in religious education, where it is very good.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; students enjoy college and demonstrate enthusiasm and high levels of interest in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; students are polite and courteous towards each other and towards adults; most have a well-developed understanding of how their actions can affect others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good, between all members of the college community. Students listen with respect to others' opinions and ideas and work well together when required. They develop into confident and mature individuals who are well prepared for further education or the world of work.
Attendance	Very good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

- Teaching is good overall in nearly all subjects
- It is nearly always good in both stages, Years 7-9 and Years 10-11
- The quality is satisfactory in music, where there is staff vacancy, and in geography in Years 7-9
- Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well, with strengths in English and art and design
- Teachers use methods which help all students to learn well; language support teaching is satisfactory; the support teaching for students with special needs is good
- The consistently good learning across subjects is a college strength
- Students make notable gains in their skills and knowledge in art and design lessons and put considerable effort into their work
- They make notable gains in religious education lessons in Years 10-11; in all years, students show high levels of interest and concentration in the subject.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of	Satisfactory; all subjects now meet requirements although the

the curriculum	balance between different aspects within design and technology and physical education needs adjustment. Although now offered, too few students choose community languages at GCSE for these courses to be viable; these subjects are therefore offered in the community programme.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good; there is planned support for literacy and numeracy in Years 7-9 and an effective work-related curriculum for students in Years 10-11. Planning is good in English, language support, mathematics and physical education; it is very good in religious education.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good overall; students are supported in English lessons but not in mathematics lessons; liaison time with subject teachers is helpfully built into the timetable.
Provision for students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall and for spiritual and social development; good for moral and cultural development; the contribution from religious education is very strong; students' understanding of the way society works benefits well from the operation of the school council.
How well the school cares for its students	Good; teachers know and understand their students well; they monitor progress and personal development effectively; good arrangements in English, mathematics and science use students' results as a check on the quality of planning. The dog-fouling of the playing fields is a health and safety hazard and boundaries of the very large site are not secure.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Good; strengths in the quality of students' annual reports and parents' influence on attendance and attitudes to school; newsletters do not keep parents well up to date with developments, however.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Very good overall, with a strong senior team and exceptional leadership by the principal; most staff with management responsibilities are contributing effectively to bringing about improvements which raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory overall; this is because the governing body, which has many recently appointed members, is rebuilding its work following a period of difficulty. Although there has not been time for governors to ensure that they have a clear and up to date understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's work, the main committee has generally carried out governors' statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. The chair is taking a positive lead in working with the college and has a clear

	idea of the good things being achieved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; there is rigorous monitoring of teaching and very thorough analysis of standards.
The strategic use of resources	Very good, with very effective focus on achieving the best value from college resources; weaknesses in accommodation for English, design and technology, modern languages, physical education and the library; weaknesses in learning resources for English, science and design and technology; staffing vacancy in music. These limit students' progress.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• The college has high expectations for students' success.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about raising questions or concerns they have with the college.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The patchy homework arrangements across subjects.</li> <li>• The way the college helps students to grow into mature people.</li> <li>• A wider range of additional activities outside of lessons.</li> <li>• Closer working with parents.</li> </ul>

A small proportion of parents, four per cent, completed the parents' questionnaire and a very small proportion attended the parents' meeting, one and a half per cent. The inspectors agree with parents' positive views. However, they find that the activities provided outside lessons are satisfactory although the range has not been broadened enough since the last inspection. They find that in sport, girls do not have as many opportunities as boys to take part in activities. Inspectors find that homework arrangements are satisfactory overall, and good in mathematics, history, modern languages and religious education. They find that students develop into mature and independent young people, helped by the very good relationships in the college.

In addition, some parents at the meeting expressed appreciation of the new uniform, the way the college works closely with the community and the approachability of the new principal. They were pleased with the high attendance rate. A small number expressed concerns about the number of staff changes, the way bullying is dealt with and the need to raise standards further.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

##### **Years 7 to 9**

1. In English, since the last inspection in 1996 up to 2000, average points fell while nationally there was a rise. With this reversed in 2001, boys' results rose more than girls' results. Overall, the 2001 results were above the national figure for 2000. The average points in mathematics rose more than the national rise between 1996 and 2000. They rose further in 2001 because there was a rise in boys' results, although girls' results remained much the same as they were in 2000. Overall, the 2001 results were a little above the national figure for 2000. Science results have risen each year since 1998. The 2001 results were much the same as the national figure for 2000. When the 2001 Year 9 group joined the college, both boys' and girls' Year 6 results in each of the three subjects were about average.
2. The work seen shows that not all the Year 9 teacher assessments carried out in the other National Curriculum subjects in 2001 are fully reliable. There was over-generous assessment in history and ICT, and in modern languages and physical education assessment was too severe. Students' achievement in physical education is severely restricted by the lack of suitable accommodation.

##### **Years 10 and 11**

3. Since the last inspection, the average GCSE point scores fell a little each year until 2000, when the fall was considerable. Design and technology was the main contributor to the extent of the fall in 2000; science was another contributor. This overall trend showed clearly in the proportion of students gaining higher grades, which in each year from 1996, shows a steady fall. Over the three years to 2000, the points difference shows boys closer to the national average than girls. The reasons for the difficulties being experienced in design and technology and science are in part particular to the subject. The reasons for the overall trend are identified by the college's improvement plan.

##### **Years 7 to 11**

4. In January 2000, the new principal, a long-serving member of staff who had been seconded to lead a local school in difficulties, was appointed. He identified the quality of teaching and standards of behaviour as immediate priorities for development. Behaviour has been very effectively tackled through new college policy and procedures. These were aimed at eradicating the level of minor disruption found to be impeding the learning in lessons across the college, especially in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching has been improved through a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation. The benefit to students' results shows in the provisional results for 2001. In Year 9, the average points in each

subject were higher than the figures in any of the years since the last inspection. At GCSE, the average points scores and the proportions of students gaining five or more higher grades and five or more graded passes are each higher than the 1996 figures. The GCSE targets for 2001, challenging ones when compared to the 2000 results, were met.

5. A number of factors have affected standards in design and technology; these are being systematically and effectively tackled. Some positive effects are beginning to show. The reasons relate to unsuitable accommodation and time allocations for the different aspects of the subject, as well as to areas needing improvement in planning and teaching. In science, the recently appointed head of department is tackling areas of weakness which affect students' attainment. Science results in 2001, though improved, contributed less to the overall college improvement than most other subjects.
6. The strong department results at GCSE in 2000, both for boys and for girls, were in religious education, drama and mathematics. In these subjects, the difference between students' results and their overall college results compares favourably with the national difference. Excellent leadership and management in religious education and very high expectations for students' achievement in lessons are the main factors. There is very good drama teaching and, in the mathematics department, good commitment to making improvements. Results are strong for boys and girls together, and for boys separately, in French, German and business studies. In modern languages, aspects of the management are very good, including the monitoring of teaching and commitment to improvement; staff have very good subject expertise. However, high levels of sound disturbance affect the quality of listening in modern languages rooms. In business studies, the entry is considerably higher than it is nationally and results at the higher grades are close to the average. In comparison with their overall results in their other subjects, boys do better in business studies and this compares favourably with the national picture.
7. The weaker GCSE results in 2000, for both boys and girls, are in art and design, English, double science and design and technology. The difference between students' results in these subjects and their overall results in other subjects compares unfavourably with the national difference. Results compare unfavourably with the national difference for all students together in English literature, and for boys in geography. However, in geography, effective work is being done to raise boys' attainment, so that in 2001 the gap between boys' and girls' results closed to become less than the national difference. Comparative information is not yet available for the 2001 results. The 2000 results in English literature were not typical for the college because, exceptionally, only a small number of students took the examination. In all these subjects there was an improvement in 2001, and in art and design this was considerable. Improvement in the quality of department management in art and design, now that it is operating as a separate department, has been a significant factor in the progress made since the last inspection. Recently appointed heads of department in English and science have each identified a clear and appropriate agenda for subject development. However, students' learning in English is restricted by the limited specialist resources available in the general teaching rooms used for some English teaching.

## **English as an additional language**

8. Overall, progress is satisfactory for those students receiving targeted language support. The majority of students at the higher stages of fluency in English make good progress. Progress is slower for the small number of students at the earliest stages of English who are targeted for support. The college is aware of this; a major restructuring of the language support department is in process.

### **Gifted and talented students**

9. *Gifted and talented students made good progress overall. This is true in English, while in mathematics and science their progress is satisfactory. In the majority of other subjects their progress is good. This reflects an improvement in geography, for example. While these students make generally good progress in art and design, their evaluation skills do not progress sufficiently in Years 7 to 9.*

### **Special needs**

10. Students with special needs generally make good progress. Their progress is good in English, science, art and design, history, modern languages, physical education and religious education. They make good progress in lessons taught by specialist support staff. In other subjects their progress is satisfactory. GCSE results show consistently good achievement by students with special needs with, for example, five out of nine students at the highest stage of special needs achieving eight or nine GCSE graded passes in 2000.

### **Basic skills**

11. Overall standards of reading and writing are satisfactory across all subjects of the curriculum. Speaking is above average in Years 10 and 11, and listening above average throughout the college. Provision for developing literacy across the curriculum is currently satisfactory, and has been identified as a priority for improvement. There are, however, strengths in religious education and in history on which the college is able to draw in developing this provision.
12. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 11, standards are good in mathematics and art and design, and satisfactory in science, ICT and physical education. The standard of mental calculations is satisfactory in geography. All students use calculators appropriately and accurately. Numeracy does not feature significantly in the work seen in other subjects.

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

13. Students' attitudes to the college are good. This is true of all groups; of boys and girls, students of different ethnicity, those for whom English is an additional language and those with special needs. Students enjoy their work and show high levels of interest and enthusiasm. The small number of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and completed questionnaires confirm that their children enjoy going to the college and have positive attitudes towards learning. They also

think that the majority of students behave well, are courteous and thoughtful and show respect for other people.

14. When they start in Year 7, students quickly settle into college routines and respond positively to teachers' expectations for good behaviour and positive attitudes to work. For example, students thoroughly enjoyed an English lesson on the plurals of words; they concentrated very well, worked at a good pace and showed an excellent attitude to work. In art and design, they focused hard on the task of making silhouettes from their own drawings of birds and animals so that they made good progress. Excellent behaviour and relationships contributed to the quality of learning in mathematics in a Year 8 lesson on percentages. In drama work on 'The Tempest', students concentrated with some intensity, achieving a very successful performance. Students organise themselves effectively in science, which helps them to learn well. In Year 9, students work sensibly and independently, for example clearing up without being asked after a design and technology lesson. By Year 9, they are hard working and show a determination to reach their personal work targets.
15. In Years 10 and 11, students respond confidently to questions and take responsibility for their own work in a mature way. For example, in modern languages, Year 10 students gave each other good support and meticulously checked their own work. In English, Year 11 students work well without direct supervision. In the majority of lessons, good relationships between staff and students make a very positive contribution to learning. Subjects such as English, science, mathematics, physical education and drama incorporate small group and paired working in many lessons in which students readily help each other with minor difficulties.
16. In the five lessons where attitudes to learning were unsatisfactory, the teacher allowed chatter to continue when it was not about work, and small groups of students, often boys, showed poor concentration. This happened on occasion in mathematics, science and modern languages. Some students with special needs lose concentration when they are not helped by a support teacher and there is some silliness from a small number of boys in Year 8, some liking to dominate class discussions.
17. Behaviour is good. Students are polite and courteous towards each other and towards adults. Most have a well-developed understanding of the way their actions can affect others. Staff treat students with respect and consideration; this is reflected in the confidence and maturity that students show in their relationships in college. They greet visitors to the college in a welcoming manner and with an easy confidence. Students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, many of whom speak English as an additional language, are fully included in the life and work of the college. There is very good racial harmony throughout the college community.
18. No instances of bullying or harassment were seen during the inspection. A concern expressed by some parents, that staff do not deal adequately with bullying, is not substantiated by inspection evidence. Students think that standards of behaviour are good and that bullying is not an issue. They feel confident that staff will not tolerate any harassing behaviour and that should any occur, students will be confident enough to report it. They are certain that such matters are dealt with effectively.



19. In the past year there have been 48 fixed period exclusions, 12 involving girls; the proportion is much the same as the national figure for schools of a similar size. While the proportion of exclusions involving students from Afro-Caribbean and white backgrounds appears to be much higher than the proportion on roll in each group, these were successive exclusions of two students. The single permanent exclusion, involving a boy, is below average. The college is monitoring exclusions by a range of factors, including ethnicity.
20. Students respond well to opportunities for showing initiative and taking responsibility, notably through the student council. Both the chairing and minuting of council meetings are undertaken by the students themselves. However, there are not enough such opportunities, particularly for girls. This was confirmed, by the boys as well as the girls, during inspectors' discussions with students from each year group,
21. Attendance is well above the national average. Punctuality in the morning and throughout the day is very good. Overall, the good learning attitudes and behaviour reported at the last inspection were evident in the current inspection although the improvement plan indicates some slippage in between. During their time in the college, students develop into confident and mature young people who are well prepared for further study or for beginning work.

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

22. The improvement since the last inspection, from 88 per cent to 98 per cent satisfactory or better lessons, is significant. The amount of good or better teaching has improved from about 45 per cent to 70 per cent and the amount of very good or better teaching from 16.5 per cent to 24 per cent. The overall quality is consistently good across the college, except in music where it is satisfactory. As a consequence, students' learning reflects this quality.
23. In addition to the strengths identified in the summary report, students benefit from their teachers' very good subject expertise in science, modern languages and music. Students' interest and concentration in religious education are stimulated by very good lesson planning, use of resources and high expectations for what can be achieved. Students behave very well in drama, mathematics, art and design, geography, physical education and religious education and so make a good contribution to their own learning. Mostly this is because their teachers are very skilful at managing them, but it also results from their strong interest in the work. In religious education and in English in Years 10 and 11, students have a good idea about how well they are doing because they receive very helpful marking and evaluative comments in lessons.
24. In nearly all subjects there is some very good teaching. The college has a range of high quality teaching skills to draw on, in English, drama, mathematics, science, art and design, geography, history, ICT, modern languages, physical education and religious education, in its work to make further improvements. For example in English, very good relationships, good humoured discussion, pacy circulation round the class making helpful and encouraging comments, challenging time limits for activities and a skilful balance of encouragement and challenge in response to

individual contributions, combined to help students to learn well. Excellent teaching was seen in drama and religious education.

25. Where teaching was on three occasions unsatisfactory, there are a number of areas for improvement. For example, in mathematics, the attention of the whole class was not maintained because the teaching methods did not stimulate interest and concentration; the management of some poor behaviour which resulted from this was ineffective. In modern languages, the lesson was not planned to ensure that students were actively involved; class management was a weakness, not helped by the poor attitudes shown by some boys. In music, there are shortcomings related to planning, expectations, use of resources, marking and homework. There are aspects needing improvement in other subjects. For example, in physical education, students in Years 7 to 9 do not receive helpful enough evaluative comments about their work.

### **GNVQ courses**

26. Students' learning of the content of both health and social care and business studies is good. Teachers' knowledge of the curriculum for GCSE business studies and aspects of health and social care such as child development, enables them to provide directed learning for students that is well structured and appropriately paced. Relationships are good. In business studies, teachers are able to improvise and amend the curriculum to respond to current world events such as the attack on America which occurred during the inspection week. In health and social care, they follow up unexpected, weak understanding of prior learning such as the technicalities and implications of menstruation in adolescence. Students are responsive to teachers' good humour and develop positive attitudes which enable them to learn effectively. However, the wider aspects of learning, particularly those related to the different style of learning required in GNVQ courses involving independent research, investigation and self-directed work, are unsatisfactory.

### ***Special needs support***

27. Teaching by staff who are specialists in special needs is good. In Year 7 to 9, for example, students' reading and comprehension skills improved because their pronunciation was corrected while they read and good questioning helped them to visualise the events in the story. Sometimes, numeracy work is not always planned well enough for students' individual needs. In Years 10 and 11, the teamwork by the subject teacher and the support teacher ensured that students' progress was checked frequently; the students were well motivated by this, working well in pairs on a project about holidays and travel. On another occasion, the teacher's very good knowledge of a wide range of special needs ensured that the work set for individuals matched their needs well so that they could make good progress.
28. All teachers have a good knowledge of individual students and their needs. The contribution of support staff in lessons is planned well so that they back up the teacher's guidance very effectively; for example, in drama and science. Firm management and good humour help students with behaviour difficulties to make good progress. However, on occasion when the teaching methods were ineffective, students lost concentration because they were left too long on worksheet tasks.

## Language support

29. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is most effective where staff have a language specialism; where this is not so, so that students cannot follow a text, this holds them back. There are good relationships between support teachers and students. When targeted support is effective students acquire new skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding, for example in a Year 11 English withdrawal lesson on stealing. Students make intellectual, physical and creative effort, for example making finger pots in Year 7 ceramics, and when studying autobiography in Year 7 English; they set themselves a good pace when completing work in algebra. They sustain interest in their work, for example when conducting science experiments on reacting metals. However, when learning targets are not set and shared with students, they do not understand how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Where work is not adapted they find it harder to follow the work, particularly when colloquial English is a feature. Study of colloquial and idiomatic language presents more difficulties for older students.
30. A number of areas need development. Lessons are not always planned jointly by the subject teacher and the support teacher, with targets for individual students, with the result that much of the support is reactive and 'on the hoof'. Too often, language support staff have a backroom role within lessons. There are a number of inexperienced new staff in the department who require training. Sometimes, support staff do not give the individuals they are supporting enough 'space', which prevents the students from mixing with others and limits the range of support the staff can provide.

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

31. There is a broad range of learning opportunities, relevant to the needs of students, including those with special needs, those who are gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language. The college actively promotes equality of opportunity to ensure that all students have access to the curriculum and are provided with appropriate personal support and guidance. It is well advanced in working towards the local education authority standard for promoting racial equality in schools, 'Young, gifted and equal'. The college community is an inclusive one.
32. Requirements for the National Curriculum, for religious education and for sex and drugs education are met. All students have the opportunity to study all subjects, including drama which is timetabled as a specialist subject in all years. In Years 7 to 9, students follow courses in French or German and can choose to study a community language after school. While the overall curriculum provides a sound balance of subjects and courses, within design and technology there is an imbalance in the time allocations for the different courses offered within the subject. The Years 7 to 9 curriculum for food technology is further adversely affected by the timetable rotation. Within physical education in Years 7 to 9, there is a similar lack of balance in provision, resulting from the lack of suitable indoor accommodation for the subject.
33. A good range of courses is offered in Years 10 and 11. This includes community languages, but because so very few students opt to study them in school time,

these subjects are offered as additional opportunities after school where the take-up is good. Every effort is made to provide students with their first choices. For example, in art and design where the subject is over-subscribed, the college makes arrangements for students to follow courses in graphic art instead of design and technology. GCSE German is available in lunchtime sessions. Appropriate provision is made for a small number of students to follow a work-related curriculum, which replaces either a modern language or design and technology. In English, mathematics and religious education, students can gain a Certificate of Achievement. Religious education is a very popular choice and both full and short GCSE courses are offered.

34. In response to the weakness in provision for work-related courses identified at the last inspection, the college introduced GNVQ courses in business studies and health and social care in 2000, adding the GNVQ course in ICT in 2001. The ICT course is so newly implemented that no judgements can be made on the quality of provision. Interest in these courses is very high; in response, the college makes additional provision after school. GNVQ business studies replaced GCSE business studies in the Year 10 and 11 curriculum. In the current year, a small group of students are studying GCSE as an after-school course. The students taking GNVQ business studies are mostly boys and those taking health and social care are mostly girls. The GNVQ classes however, reflect the ethos of GCSE courses rather than the GNVQ approach, which requires that the curriculum is managed to cater for different learning and teaching styles. This aspect of provision is unsatisfactory. Appropriate work placements are arranged for the very large numbers of students taking these courses – a major management task.
35. A satisfactory range of extra activities extends students' experience, although, because the inspection took place in the first full week of the school year, not all the planned sessions had started. The college organises summer schools and Easter revision sessions for examinations, which are usually well attended. Activities take place in the lunch hour and after school. Reading and poetry clubs organised by the English department are well attended. Students attend theatre performances and concerts; for example, in the last academic year, Year 11 students saw 'Of Mice and Men' in Birmingham. There are trips to Germany and France each year. The music department organises lessons for drums and keyboards and students have access to the music area at lunchtime to complete their compositions. There is a range of sports activities but there is justifiable concern among both parents and students that the range of sporting opportunities for girls is too limited. This is a shortcoming recognised by the college. The range of activities offered to boys is wider and includes rugby, football, hockey and athletics. Action is being taken to increase the opportunities for girls' participation in organised sports activities at the end of the college day.
36. Personal, social and health education, called 'cross-curricular' by the college, is provided within the timetabled curriculum. The programme is comprehensive although it does not currently include a scheme of work for citizenship. An audit of the programme, and of the elements of citizenship that already exist in subjects and courses, is currently underway. The objective is to agree policy by the end of the autumn term, which incorporates a full citizenship programme.
37. Careers education is good. It begins in Year 9 with 'Stop the Clock' events, giving students a taste of industrial and enterprise activities through working alongside employees. All Year 10 students have two weeks of work experience organised

through Trident. The emphasis is on personal development rather than getting the feel of a particular job, and students choose two contrasting placements from which the final choice is made. All Year 11 students have an interview with an adviser from the Careers Service. Students taking vocational courses undertake work experience related to their chosen career.

38. The college has very good links with local and national companies working in the area. Under the umbrella of Leicestershire Education Business Company, students are helped to develop their business awareness, for example, through the structured programme offered by Young Enterprise. Students benefit from the highly successful Business Mentoring Programme and are entered for Achievement Awards. They have won prizes for cross-curricular work that extends the key skills essential in the world of work.
39. There are good links with schools and colleges. Links with primary schools are particularly strong in mathematics because they have a curriculum focus; information about pupils transferring to Year 7 is passed on. This is not true for other subject departments who would like to establish stronger links. The community character of the college means that a wide range of activities takes place on the premises which are also open to students. As the base for Soar Valley Music Centre, primary pupils are accustomed to visiting the college and music staff get to know the instrumentalists. Sixth form and tertiary colleges provide helpful information about course opportunities and students attend their open days. Information about past Soar Valley students is passed back regularly and used as part of the advice and counselling process in careers education.
40. The organisation of language support is good. The support given in lessons enables students to follow the same curriculum as everybody else. On occasion, work in small groups withdrawn from lessons is used appropriately for specific purposes. For example, this strategy was used for a religious education topic on marriage in Christianity through conducting the teaching in Gujarati. Specific help was given for a poem about stealing in examination work. A bilingual member of staff helped a student follow a science lesson on 'separation' through using Swahili. However, because planning does not take enough account of the results of assessments to target specific individual needs, students' overall progress is satisfactory rather than good.
41. Provision for students with special needs is good. There is planned support for both literacy and numeracy in Years 7 to 9. The work-related curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is very effective in motivating students and meeting their needs. Staff are effectively deployed to support individual students in subject lessons. Students with the highest level of need are appropriately given priority although care is taken in deploying staff so that other students with special needs also benefit. In English and religious education the resources match students' needs very well. However, in history and geography, the use of resources is not planned for consistently and in science and modern languages there is a lack of resources to match students' special needs.
42. Since the last inspection, there has generally been satisfactory improvement, although the range of extra activities has not been widened sufficiently.

### ***Personal development***

43. The college has very good arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. There are strengths in the example set by the principal and the staff, the high quality of relationships between all members of the college community and the contribution of religious education.
44. For spiritual development, provision is very good. The quality of the weekly year-group assemblies, which follow a common programme, is high. As well as focusing on social and moral issues, the main festivals of all major world religions are included. A 'Thought for the Week' provides the focus for tutorial periods on the other four days. On display in the hall, it provided a talking point for some Year 7 students at lunchtime. There is good improvement in the quality of assemblies since the last inspection, although the requirement for a daily act of corporate worship is not yet fully met. Students' awareness and self-knowledge is fostered through their literature studies in English and through aspects of art and design. In history, the beliefs and values of others are central to such topics as the English Reformation and the Holocaust. In science, students express their wonderment at the diversity of life when they use microscopes for the first time and reflect on the insignificance of humankind when they study the place of earth in the universe.
45. There is good provision for moral development. The code of conduct, printed in the students' planner, stresses truth, honesty, justice and respect. These values are emphasised in religious education lessons, where a sense of identity and community are especially well fostered. Students are taught to understand right and wrong and expected to exercise this knowledge in practice, for example in the honest reporting of experimental results in science and in looking after college equipment in all departments. There are very clear expectations for good behaviour, respect for others and others' ideas, and for respecting others' property. There is opportunity to consider moral questions, for example through discussion in English of euthanasia and animal experimentation, and in science of environmental issues. Students took part in the fund raising for victims of the Gujerat earthquake.
46. Very good provision is made for social development, supported by the very good relationships in the college. The college sets a very good example in the inclusive approach to its work. It encourages pride in family and ethnicity through celebration events and in discussion. Students take part in exchange visits to Europe and sports team fixtures, attend summer schools, and participate in community activities, for example, in the after-school ICT sessions. Opportunities for students to develop a sense of social responsibility have improved since the last inspection, although such opportunities are not sufficiently in place across all aspects of the college's work. There is now a student council with two elected delegates from each year group. It operates autonomously and has its own small budget. The elected delegates report back to a committee consisting of two elected members from each tutor group, and through this mechanism, students' views are reported to the student council and the results of council action passed back to tutor groups. Students are represented on the college eco-committee which takes responsibility for the college environment, and on the Leicester Young People's Council. These experiences enable students to learn about democracy in action and to develop skills in making and responding to representation and majority views.
47. Opportunities to visit theatres, galleries and museums in Britain and in other countries broaden students' cultural education and the provision is good. Successful public performances by an Indian/Irish dance group were put on during the last school year. Students study different cultural traditions, for example when

major religious festivals are celebrated. This is a feature of the literature studied in English and in the topics in geography, history and art and design, and in projects on food and textiles in design and technology. However, the range of artefacts on display from differing traditions is limited. Students have easy access to information about other countries and civilisations through the Internet.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

48. The support, guidance and welfare provided by the college are good. Teachers know and understand their students well. Support takes account of the wide range of individual needs through a well-structured pastoral system that includes a team of learning mentors (EiC funded) and a full-time welfare officer. As a result, students' personal development is very well monitored and supported. A trained counsellor is available to those who need additional personal help and guidance. The arrangements for child protection are effective. Staff are well trained and alert to the needs of students, particularly those staff who are members of the pastoral team. One of the vice-principals takes the lead as child protection co-ordinator and has established good links with all appropriate outside agencies.
49. Health and safety procedures are diligently carried out. There are good arrangements for first aid, including a well-equipped medical room used only for the purpose. A small number of minor health and safety matters raised during the inspection were given immediate attention by the college. However, one health and safety hazard is beyond its direct control. A right of way footpath crosses the college site. It affords the public open access to the college's grassed areas which are used for physical education and students' play at breaks and lunchtimes. Members of the public regularly walk their dogs across these areas which are frequently fouled with dog faeces. This fouling of the area is a serious health hazard.
50. Very good policies and procedures for ensuring good behaviour are in place. The management of behaviour is carried out consistently well across the college. Records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying or harassment, are dealt with in a sensitive and positive way. The inspectors find that concerns about the way the school deals with bullying which were expressed by a small number of parents are not substantiated. The policy of rewarding and celebrating good attitudes to learning as well as good achievement contributes to the positive ethos. The college manages attendance and punctuality matters exceptionally well. It employs a full-time welfare officer who has rigorous procedures for following up unexpected absence, poor punctuality and attempted truancy. Most parents give the college their full co-operation in ensuring that their children attend very well and punctually. The new Student Achievement Suite, a learning support unit established with EiC funding, aims to support those students at risk, particularly those experiencing behaviour difficulties which impede their learning.
51. Overall, there are satisfactory procedures for assessing, monitoring and reporting students' academic progress. They are good in English, mathematics, geography, modern languages and religious education. Teachers make satisfactory use of the information that is gained from students' assessments and test results to help improve their planning. Departments doing well in all aspects of assessment and monitoring across all year groups are English, mathematics and religious education.

There are weaknesses in the monitoring in design and technology and music, and in music assessment in Years 7 to 9. Where this aspect of the college's work is at its best, data on assessment is carefully analysed, individual targets are set and progress towards them rigorously monitored. This is having a significant effect in raising standards in those subjects that make the best use of the available information. The information is helpfully being used to identify gifted and talented students so that the curriculum planned for them can be extended to take account of their interests and provide them with sufficiently challenging work. The college is the lead school for this aspect of the work on initiatives funded by Excellence in Cities.

52. The special needs department makes full use of the information it receives from primary schools about the new Year 7 students, in order to identify any special needs. It is now placing greater emphasis on Year 6 test results and is using them well to assist in the process; in past years the college has carried out its own testing. Where subject teachers have concerns, there are established procedures for passing on the relevant information. The progress of all students with special needs is regularly reviewed. Procedures for annual reviews of those students with full statements of need are very thorough and appropriately involve subject staff and parents. Students' progress is checked and evaluated very well. Their individual education (learning) plans are well constructed with progress targets well matched to individual needs. However, the college does not have adequate procedures for identifying the special needs of those students receiving language support. In the language support department, there is work underway to correlate National Curriculum level descriptors with English fluency stages in order to co-ordinate students' assessments better. The current twice-yearly monitoring of students' progress is not focused sharply enough and is currently being reviewed.
53. Following the last inspection, assessment was a key issue for action. There has been significant improvement, stimulated and supported by the excellent guidance in the new assessment policy. The college is aware that this guidance is not yet being put into practice consistently across all subjects and is giving good support for further development.

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

54. The college works hard to develop a close working partnership with parents. The signed agreement between the college, parents and students sets out clearly what is expected from each. There is a very good induction programme for new students and their parents, with ample opportunity for consultation throughout the transfer period between primary and secondary school. It includes an open evening for Year 6 parents in the autumn term preceding transfer. The timing of the open evening held for all year groups in the autumn term is helpful. It gives parents information about their children's progress at an early stage in the year so that they can support them in making any improvements needed. The timing is particularly helpful for Year 7 parents who get to know how well their children are settling down. An open evening is held for the parents of those students involved in the EiC-funded mentoring programme so that they are fully involved in target-setting discussions with their children. These are additional to the formal consultation evenings, when parents discuss their children's progress with subject teachers and form tutors. In response to parents' requests, the organisation of consultation evenings was changed in the previous term in order to maintain confidentiality. Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's selection of GCSE courses in



Year 9, and to discuss work experience in Year 10 and the transfer to sixth form colleges in Year 11. The student diaries are used effectively for home-school communication, for example, for monitoring homework and raising questions with staff over day-to-day concerns. At the last Celebration Evening, celebrating the achievement of students in each year group, the hall and adjacent spaces were packed with over 600 parents.

55. The quality of the information provided for parents is generally very good. There is a regular flow of news about college activities and special events although not about the many changes and developments in the college's work. This was reflected in some of the comments from parents. Students' annual progress reports are comprehensive and often exemplary. They include a curriculum summary for every subject, a student self-assessment linked to their personal targets, a report on the student's attitude and achievement, attainment and effort grades, and specific advice to help each student to improve the standard of their work.
56. Links with the parents of students with special needs are very good. As a result of a parent survey, the quantity and range of information to be provided for parents has been substantially increased. Parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress through termly reports; parents receive regularly updated information about the targets in individual education plans; the college planner is used well as a regular means of communicating with parents.
57. Overall, the effectiveness of the links with parents, and the contribution parents make to their children's learning, are good. The partnership between the college and parents is now stronger than was reported at the last inspection. Then, a key issue for action was to 'ensure that staff and parents were engaged more systematically in developing the work of the college'. Through the combination of student monitoring, tutor support and regular consultation with students and their parents, everyone involved in the teaching and learning partnership is able to have a clear understanding of what is expected and what can be achieved. However, in the push to halt the fall in GCSE results, the college has not at the same time kept parents sufficiently up to date with changes and developments.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. Since the last inspection, the evidence at first is of a decline in the standards being achieved by the college. Latterly, the evidence is of a turn-round in what is being achieved. The decline showed in two major ways. GCSE results fell each year so that the college no longer achieved results that were above the national average. Internal difficulties in the governing body resulted in the need for external support in reconciling differing viewpoints in order to enable the work of the governing body properly to continue. Governors attended many meetings in the endeavour to find a way forward. There have been many staff changes during this period and a number of changes in the membership of the governing body, some very recent. The new principal has been in post 18 months and the current chair of governors recently assumed her role; a new leadership team has been established.
59. The turn-round shows in a number of ways. GCSE results rose in 2001 and inspectors saw this improvement reflected in students' work during the inspection. The improvement in teaching since the last inspection is significant. Then, only 88 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, which by today's standards would be judged unsatisfactory. The targets set in 2000 for yearly improvement in teaching quality were substantially exceeded in the findings of the inspection. Teaching is monitored by senior staff and heads of subject to very good effect. It is in the consistently good quality of teaching across nearly all subjects that staff commitment to improvement shows most clearly. The commitment is generally good and given a strong lead by the leadership team.
60. There is considerable strength in the leadership and management of the college, to which the principal's contribution is of exceptional quality. He is ably supported by the vice-principals, two of whom he appointed. Almost all school policies have been recently reviewed and revised, either by June 2000 or during 2000-2001. Together, they form a coherent set of well-presented documents which communicate succinctly a sense of clear direction and high expectations for the development of the college community. The improvement plan focuses sharply on areas requiring improvement and, in a strategic way, tackles other aspects of the college's work which directly affect quality in the areas needing attention. For example, for the target of raising standards in literacy and numeracy skills, attention is being given to researching and analysing students' performance, revising planning, providing training for the whole staff, and monitoring planning, teaching in lessons and student' work. Although members of the governing body have given much time to dealing with matters concerning their own procedures, none the less, their involvement in policy review and development planning has continued appropriately in the main committee. However, the governing body and its new members are not in a position to have a clear and up-to-date picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's work. This is because it was necessary for those in office during the last year to give their time and attention to difficult matters concerning their own operation as governors. The chair's regular meetings with the principal are enabling her to gain a good understanding of the issues affecting the college's work.
61. In subject departments, leadership and management are mostly good, with particular strengths in English and religious education. Improvement is needed in the management of vocational courses. The department is operating in separate course units, not as a cohesive whole, and the co-ordinator has insufficient oversight of the different courses to be able to create any kind of GNVQ ethos for

learning. No base exists for GNVQ learning, with classes taking place in rooms scattered widely across the college and business studies rooms at opposite ends of the building. The investment of time and resources in developing the quality of subject management is enabling secure improvement to be achieved at a good pace, with a positive effect on students' standards and achievement. No common documentation exists between, and sometimes within, disciplines, although some documents developed last year in the health and social care area were good. This documentation is starting to reflect the expectations of, for example, the cross-referencing of work for portfolios and appropriate assessment procedures.

62. Very good use is being made of new technology to make advances in the college's work. It is being used as a management tool, as a tool in developing the range of experiences offered in the curriculum and as a key skill in students' achievements. For example, the principles of inclusion are effectively put into practice through analysing student data on results, attendance and exclusions by gender and ethnic group, to check that no groups are being disadvantaged by the college's procedures. There are notable features in the use of technology in the management of special needs provision; extensive information and analysis is made available so that all subjects can be involved in reviews of progress. The effects of the new mentoring arrangements for GCSE students (EiC funded) are being tracked to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring support as shown by students' predicted and actual results; the initial findings are that improvements are being achieved. The college is piloting a text-messaging strategy for following up attendance issues. Each teacher has a laptop computer, on which all college data is currently being installed. When the technology goes 'wireless' shortly, staff will have internal access to college data, such as assessment results and analyses. The college expects laptops to be made available for use by students in lessons in order to extend current computer provision; it is early days in the achievement of this. Each aspect of the use of technology contributes positively to the provision for students and the college's work to raise standards.
63. Very good leadership is given by the special needs co-ordinator. The designated governor takes an active interest in special needs work and has regular contact with the co-ordinator. Governors are kept appropriately informed of developments. Although detailed information is provided directly to parents, the governors' annual report to parents does not contain sufficient detail on the implementation of the college's policy. A recently established database holds a very wide range of information about students' special needs so the college has the capability to monitor progress and plan future provision very effectively. Planning is very good and the college is well prepared for the revised regulations. Good use is made of external services and funding is appropriately deployed. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.
64. Leadership and management of language support are satisfactory; there is close teamwork within the department. The principal has a clear vision for establishing inclusive provision. A language support co-ordinator is soon to be appointed to provide a strategic view and link to the leadership team. The action plan identifies appropriate areas for development; the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is used properly for its purpose.
65. Financial resources are being put to very effective use to support the intense period of development currently in process. This is achieved, for example, through the investment in new technology. Through an imaginative combination of new build

and refurbishment, the college has gained upgraded science accommodation in nearly all laboratories and new accommodation for humanities from the funding available for building a new science block. This is an excellent example of achieving best value. The college has drawn on its balances to bring about other, less major, upgradings, for example interim improvements to the design and technology accommodation. A financial audit in April 2000 found a good standard of financial record keeping. Minutes of the governors' finance, staffing and premises committee show that meetings are well attended and financial matters adequately considered. Governors' responsibilities for performance management and annual pay review have been carried out as required.

## **Staffing**

66. Staff are generally well qualified for their teaching responsibilities in the college. Currently there is one vacancy for a head of music. In mathematics, there are insufficient staff whose main specialism is mathematics to cover the curriculum. Support and training for non-specialist mathematics teaching need strengthening. The college recognises the need for substantial training for vocational course staff who do not hold GNVQ qualifications or have prior experience of vocational courses. The effects of the training already received are not yet sufficiently in evidence. For example, on occasion, there are inappropriate teaching approaches which have an adverse effect on students' learning.
67. Induction procedures for newly qualified teachers and newly appointed teachers are very good. The procedures meet the statutory requirements, with a very comprehensive scheme in place for monitoring the teaching of newly qualified teachers. Mentors are appointed within departments and teachers are observed both by them and the induction co-ordinator. All four newly qualified teachers feel very well supported, both by the leadership team and their departments. The college runs a well-structured induction course with sessions on a variety of key topics, although there is no session on language support.

## **Accommodation**

68. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. There are a number of strengths. The college is well provided with playing fields and other external facilities, used also by the community. Grassed areas are particularly well maintained although fouling by dogs is a hazard and the boundaries are not secure. During the inspection a burnt-out car was abandoned on one of the pitches; similar incidents have occurred before. Significant improvements have recently been made to the building resulting in considerable benefits for students' learning in geography, history and science. New building and better student management have removed the problems noted in the last report of movement around the college. The priorities identified for further improvement are highly appropriate. However, there are weaknesses in accommodation for English, drama, design and technology, modern languages, music, physical education and GNVQ courses. The library is far too small for development as a resource centre for a school of this size. These weaknesses have a negative effect on students' learning and progress.

## Resources

69. Spending on resources is much higher than at the time of the last inspection. In general, the quality and sufficiency of resources now satisfactorily support teaching and learning. There are strengths in departmental resources in music, religious education and special needs, and shortcomings in English, drama, science, design and technology, history and modern languages. For example, in English there is limited availability of texts and in drama, there are no sets of scripts for Year 10 studies. The ratio of computers to students, criticised in the last report, now compares favourably with national figures. There are weaknesses in the learning resources allocated for GNVQ courses. On these courses students do not have sufficient opportunity to use computers and research information on the Internet in order to develop their study skills appropriately. Computers are frequently unavailable except during allocated lesson times. Basics, such as access to a photocopier for those who do find their own up-to-date information from publications, are lacking.
70. Although limited in size, the library makes good provision for students through links with the local library service. It is too small for the adequate display of its stock of fiction (shelves are double-stacked) and contains only two computers. Both these factors restrict students' opportunities to use the library for research. None the less, it is developing a range of reference books that make knowledge available to more students that can benefit from using encyclopaedias. The library contains a good selection of guided readers and mother tongue stories. It offers a useful range of bilingual texts and there is a good stock of simplified versions that give access to great literature to students whose reading skills are limited. Students enjoy the library and use it well.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to continue to raise standards, governors and senior staff should give priority to the following key issues for action.

(1) Improve the accommodation for English, design and technology, modern languages, physical education, GNVQ courses and the library \*

by

- Continuing to establish specialist, suited subject accommodation to maximise the effective use of resources in ensuring good learning
- Minimising the sound interference to classrooms and workshops from adjacent teaching rooms so that students' concentration is not adversely affected, and in modern languages, so that students can hear clearly what is being said in the foreign language
- Providing sufficient indoor teaching space for physical education to enable the department to offer a balanced range of National Curriculum activities in all weathers
- Providing physical education changing rooms big enough for class sizes
- Ensuring that design and technology workshops do not restrict teaching methods
- Establishing a specialist and resourced base for GNVQ courses so that students' learning skills can be suitably developed
- Providing a library space that is large enough and suitably equipped for a school of this size.

(Paragraphs: 2,5,6,7,32,61,68,70,79,118,119,153,167,169,170)

(2) Ensure that assessment arrangements are carried out equally well in all subject areas \*

through

- Establishing interim arrangements pending the appointment of a head of music to ensure that college policy is fully implemented
- Strengthening college guidance on using data effectively to track the progress of individual students and of year groups as they move through the college
- Ensuring that the progress of students at the early stages of English fluency is tracked and evaluated systematically
- Developing departmental self-review further to establish to what extent assessment data is used to evaluate and improve subject planning and organisation, and ensure that assessments are accurate.

(Paragraphs: 25,40,51-53,99,135,136,139,147,153,160,162,164)

(3) Implement procedures to ensure that governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses \*

through

- Resuming and strengthening the full working procedures of the governing body

- Implementing a manageable committee structure to enable governors to carry out their responsibilities fully
- Going ahead with the plan to link governors with subjects and other areas of the college's work and involving them in review meetings and discussion
- Implementing a schedule for reporting to governors on the findings of college monitoring, for example, about the range and quality of learning resources and the quality of GNVQ course development.

(Paragraphs: 25,26,29,30,32,34,41,61,66,69,83,90,100,118,162)

(4) Ensure that parents are kept well up to date about all new developments through

- Strengthening arrangements to co-ordinate all contact and communication with parents
- Establishing a formal meetings mechanism for discussion and consultation between parents and senior staff
- Ensuring that parents are frequently updated on new developments and improvements.

(Paragraphs: 55,57)

(5) Seek local authority action to prevent the health and safety hazard caused by the dog-fouling of the college's playing fields and make the site secure. \*

(Paragraphs: 49,68)

\* already identified by the college

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	177
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	62

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	39	82	50	3	0	0
Percentage	1	22	46	28	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	1211
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	182

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	35
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	310

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	314

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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)**

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	135	107	242

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	61	90	74
	Girls	78	75	62
	Total	139	165	136
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (79)	68 (68)	56 (52)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (22)	47 (45)	24 (17)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	87	79
	Girls	71	80	71
	Total	133	167	150
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (62)	69 (69)	62 (62)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (32)	47 (38)	27 (28)
	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 (Year 11)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	140	106	246

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	49	122	133
	Girls	54	96	104
	Total	103	218	237
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	42 (49)	89 (95)	96 (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	35.0 (40.1)
	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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

### Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	13
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	5
Indian	963
Pakistani	15
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	179
Any other minority ethnic group	31

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	21	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	16	0
Other minority ethnic groups	5	1

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

### Teachers and classes

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.4
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.3

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	388

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.8
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22
Key Stage 4	21

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	3,140,441
Total expenditure	2,964,969
Expenditure per pupil	2,439
Balance brought forward from previous year	71,339
Balance carried forward to next year	246,811

### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1211
Number of questionnaires returned	48

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	2	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	44	13	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	38	8	6	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	33	19	4	2
The teaching is good.	33	48	8	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	42	10	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	46	4	2	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	40	8	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	21	44	27	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	33	40	15	4	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	44	17	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	40	21	8	4

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

### ENGLISH

72. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- GCSE results in English language now about average, literature above average
- Teaching is good
- Good learning results from teachers' effective management of behaviour
- Effective strategies to teach basic language skills
- Very good marking and tracking of students' progress
- Very good leadership and management reflect college aims very well

#### Areas for improvement

- Lack of opportunities in Years 7 and 8 to develop speaking and listening skills
- Planning for Years 7 to 9 not sharp enough to show progress clearly
- Too many lessons taught in non-specialist accommodation
- Insufficient books for every student to have their own copy

73. In the work seen, standards improved from below average on entry to Year 7 to average in Year 9. Students' achievement is good. Their ability to speak clearly and to listen carefully to their teacher and to each other improves over time. However, there are few opportunities to practise these key skills in a formal way, for example through presentations to the class or through organised debates. In group work both boys and girls share responses to their reading, showing perceptive insights into the way the characters behave. Overall standards in reading aloud are initially below average in Year 7. By Year 9, however, through frequent opportunities to read to each other in groups, the majority of students read fluently and with expression from a demanding range of texts that includes Dickens and Shakespeare. Their written work, often in the form of a letter or diary, shows good understanding of plot and character. By Year 8, most are confident in spelling and grammar. Students with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in their mechanical accuracy and their ability to sustain a piece of writing. By Year 9, nearly all have developed at least a sound understanding of the skills of writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. The overall standard of handwriting is average and sometimes better; word-processing is used effectively to present essays, reports and brochures.

74. In Years 10 and 11, average standards are sustained. Most students speak confidently and have effective listening skills, for example when discussing the opening sequence from the film 'Of Mice and Men'. Higher attainers write detailed and perceptive comparisons of different film and stage versions of 'Macbeth'. Year 11 students show good understanding in their writing of the complex social and family relationships in 'An Inspector Calls'. In concise and informative writing on work experience, students used a fresh and candid style that was exactly right for a younger audience. Students with special needs continue to make good progress during Years 10 and 11, using re-drafting and word-processing to improve their written work. For example, they make good use of colour, fonts and graphics to

produce invitation cards, for contrasting occasions, that have a professional finish. Overall, achievement is good.

75. There is a very positive atmosphere in most lessons; teachers and students work well together. Self-assessment and personal target setting are encouraged from Year 7 and students show increasing awareness of how well they are learning and making progress. Their interest and respect for each other's work grow as they become older; they learn a good deal from discussing and from constructive criticism of each other's work. Most students comply well with the frequent requirement to change working groups, both boys and girls from all ethnic groups taking the leadership role in learning tasks. The great majority of students enjoy English studies and are keen to do well. Some potentially challenging behaviour was seen in two Year 9 classes, but was well managed so that it did not interfere with the learning of other students. Overall, students' behaviour and attitudes are good throughout the college, mainly because teachers manage their students very well.
76. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. The planned work is well varied and currently being revised to reflect the National Literacy Strategy being introduced in Years 7 and 8. Students quickly focus on their learning tasks because teachers are very clear about the purpose of each lesson. Teachers share the learning targets and check students' progress at different points in lessons. Students' active involvement in their own learning is encouraged by well-structured group work through which they learn from each other. For example, Year 7 students discussed and reassembled the paragraphs of a story so that they developed their understanding of narrative structure. Both boys and girls from all ethnic backgrounds feel confident about exploring and developing their ideas because the teachers have created a positive atmosphere for learning in which nobody is put down for making a mistake. Students have confidence in their teachers because they prepare well and have good subject expertise. Students build on their previous knowledge and existing skills through a well-planned sequence of tasks that challenges them to improve. Their good progress in written English is achieved by very thorough and encouraging marking, generally supported with helpful advice on how to improve. The great majority of students develop sound language skills because the teachers use effective strategies for checking their progress, for example by equipping them all with personal whiteboards to display their answers. Students with special needs make good progress because teachers know their difficulties well and provide them with appropriate tasks and learning aids such as writing outlines and prompt sheets. Those for whom English is an additional language make good progress, often receiving helpful guidance from a well-briefed learning support assistant. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In two lessons, however, the pace of learning was too slow, either because groups were too large or because the working partnerships chosen by students did not result in concentrated activity. In some lessons, independent study was limited because books had to be shared and students could not take their own copies home.
77. The good quality of learning and teaching is maintained in Years 10 and 11 under the leadership of the new head of department. All students are encouraged to take both English language and English literature examinations. Consequently, in all recent years except 2000, the proportion taking both has been significantly higher than the national figure. This inclusive approach is reflected in the open way in which unfamiliar and demanding texts are approached in lessons. For example, Year 11 students were encouraged to do a group performance of a new poem, 'I

wanna..', experimenting with sound and movement to convey the meaning. During the performances, a very wide range of contrasting interpretations and insights showed that every student had been able to engage with the poem in their own way. Students become increasingly independent in their study, with work at home effectively preparing for or backing up their classwork.

### **Literacy**

78. The college is moving towards the adoption of the National Literacy Strategy in Year 7 during the current academic year. An additional lesson will enable the English department to provide further support in developing the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing for all students in Year 7. A college-wide approach to literacy will be agreed and implemented in November 2001. Meanwhile, the provision for developing literacy skills in other curriculum subjects is patchy. In religious education, a key feature of students' success in the subject is the development of their literacy skills; students have a good understanding of vocabulary and go beyond description to explain the significance of what they have read. In geography, they are directly taught the most effective way of using notes. In modern languages, they are given a very good understanding of linguistic terminology and frequent opportunities to communicate through the spoken word. The majority of subject departments have key words on display and create good opportunities for speaking and listening. Opportunities for reading aloud are infrequent, however, and, except in English and modern languages, the marking of students' written work rarely focuses on language skills.
79. The English department is very well led and managed. The aims of the college for the social and academic development of every student are reflected in the teaching and learning. While the current scheme of work meets requirements, work has begun on revising it from Year 7. This is to ensure that it better reflects the extension of the National Literacy Strategy and provides better progression and helpful guidance to the teaching team. The department uses well the information acquired from assessments to track individual progress and to set targets for groups and individuals. Resources for learning, although well managed, are unsatisfactory however. The availability of full sets of texts is limited so that students cannot always take their own books home for independent study. The rooms allocated to the majority of teachers are dedicated to English teaching and are arranged well to suit the learning activities. Display is used effectively as a stimulus to improve standards. However, three full-time teachers do not have a regular teaching base and teach in non-specialist rooms. Students' learning is limited by this because the range of resources available in the specialist rooms to stimulate and extend their progress is therefore not readily available. Students use ICT to draft and edit their work; this is now an established work habit. Year 7 students were observed using the Internet well to research autobiographies.
80. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Standards have continued to rise, particularly for boys, so their progress from entry in Year 7 to Year 9 and onwards has improved. The overall quality of teaching is better and other strong features, such as relationships between teachers and students and provision for those with special needs, have been maintained. The English department continues to make a substantial contribution to the academic and personal development of all students in the college.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Standards achieved by both boys and girls are well above average
- Good progress in Years 7 to 9 in learning the discipline and skills of performance
- Teaching is very good, and often excellent

### Areas for improvement

- Resources and accommodation for drama are inadequate

*The new head of drama took up her appointment ten days before the inspection*

82. The standards of work seen in drama reflect the very good results at GCSE. The teachers have excellent subject knowledge and skills. They demonstrate these to the students so that they are able to model and improve their own performance. Excellent management of lessons and high expectations ensure that students make visible progress in performance. For example, in Year 11, boys and girls and students of all ethnic groups worked together very well on a jungle adventure, achieving performances of very high quality. This was because they had been led through a series of exercises that built up their performance layer by layer in movement, sound and voice. In Year 8, the students produced some very good scenarios based on 'The Tempest' that showed impressive imagination, co-operation and control.

83. Although the standards achieved in drama are very good, the facilities restrict students' progress. The lighting in the drama theatre is inadequate, and there is no storage for costume or properties. No sets of scripts are available for Year 10 students who are commencing a new GCSE syllabus in which work on scripts is an important element in the assessment. The refurbishment of the theatre and the provision of new texts are necessary for raising achievement further in an already very successful subject. The quality of the department's work has been maintained since the last inspection.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average and achievement is good
- Students' relationships and behaviour are very good and their attitudes good
- Teaching and learning are good
- Monitoring of standards is good
- Leadership and management are good

### Areas for improvement

- The management of a minority of low attainers, some with special needs
- The allocation of teaching staff to Year 7 classes.



85. Standards seen in the work in Years 7 to 9 reflect the 2001 test results. There is little difference between the standards reached by boys and girls. A significant number of students improved by two National Curriculum levels by the end of Year 9 in 2001, benefiting from the good teaching and good attitudes clearly established in the department. Computers are used appropriately for work on databases, spreadsheets and logo and support students' learning to handle graphs. Higher attainers recognise Pythagoras' Theorem from their investigation work. They know the formula for the area of a triangle and can apply it to simple problems. Gifted and talented students have the opportunity to attend specialist mathematics classes at university and many students are offered the chance to take part in the nationwide mathematics challenge. Average attainers consolidate their basic skills well, for example solving simple problems to find the third side of a right-angled triangle when given the other two. Lower attainers have a secure knowledge of basic number work but struggle to understand simple problems, on ratio for example. Students for whom English is a second language make satisfactory progress. Students from different ethnic backgrounds progress equally well. The majority of students with special needs make good progress. However, in lessons, a small minority of students makes unsatisfactory progress because the teaching methods are not sufficiently geared to maintaining their attention.
86. In Years 10 and 11, standards reflect the examination results of 2001 which were above the national average for 2000 for the proportion gaining higher grades. The potential for results to rise further in 2002 is shown in the current targets for each teaching group which are higher than for 2001. The knowledge of students' standards gained from assessments is used well to decide on teaching groups and set challenging targets. There is little difference between the standards of boys and girls, or between those of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Performance is good in relation to other subjects in the school. However, the proportion of students gaining grade A\* remains small and was below the national average in 2000. The new way in which students are now allocated to teaching groups in Year 7 is good and has the potential to raise this standard. In 2000, results at grades A\*-G were above the national average. A small number of students were entered for and obtained the Certificate of Achievement in mathematics. In the work seen, higher attainers solve simple inequalities such as  $4x-3 < 2x < 3x+7$ ; they keep a record of their progress through the syllabus, a good feature, and understand how well they are doing. Average attainers write large and small numbers in standard form. They can explain why  $12 \times 10^8 = 1.2 \times 10^9$ . Lower attainers use calculators competently and can convert metres to centimetres in simple problems involving percentages. A minority of students with special needs do not progress as well as other students because some of the teaching lacks clear lesson targets. Students for whom English is a second language make satisfactory progress.
87. Students' handling of number is good in mathematics as a result of the good teaching of basic skills, enhanced recently by some teachers adopting current approaches to numeracy development. Handling of number is good in art and design with respect to space, proportion, line and shape. Mental calculations are used appropriately in ICT, in theatre seating for example, in food calculations using spreadsheets and in graph work for GNVQ using ICT. Spatial development is good in art and design, for example in the teaching of perspective, and in geography. Statistical information is handled well in mathematics and satisfactorily in geography and ICT where graphs and charts are produced from spreadsheets. The college improvement plan incorporates very good strategies for raising numeracy standards across subjects.

88. Attitudes are good overall. In a number of lessons, these are very good and create a very good learning atmosphere. Higher attainers in Year 11 have excellent attitudes to their work; their approach is mature and effortful. However, the behaviour of a minority of lower attainers in Year 9, including some students with special needs, is unsatisfactory and this affects their learning adversely. Similarly in Year 10, some silly behaviour among a small number of students inhibits their progress. Overall, there is a good atmosphere for learning in lessons, which promotes the good standards gained in examinations.
89. Teaching and learning are good; in a fifth of lessons the quality is very good. There was unsatisfactory teaching in one lesson. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and used well for the planned topics. However, a rather narrow approach sometimes inhibits students' wider appreciation of the subject. Basic skills are taught well. In general, the influence of the National Numeracy Strategy is already having a good effect on standards, and students respond confidently to teachers' questions. In some lessons however, questions are not always sufficiently challenging and do not extend students' skill with numbers. Students read aloud and speak with confidence when required to do so. While they listen well, to each other as well as the teacher, there are weaknesses in their comprehension skills. ICT teaching and learning are satisfactory and the department is reviewing how it assesses students' work using the National Curriculum levels for ICT. Planning is good. Teachers follow a standard pattern for presenting work; this is done through question and answer sessions and giving suitable summaries at different points in the lesson while students are doing their own work. However, this pattern for using lesson time is not always appropriate. On occasion, lower attainers whose concentration span is short lose concentration towards the end of lessons so that their work rate and learning slow down. By contrast, when the lesson includes a number of different timed activities, students maintain a good pace in their learning, for example, as seen in a Year 7 lesson on number. Opportunities for stimulating discussion through using open questions are sometimes missed, as in a Year 8 lesson when the question of division by zero was not followed up. Learning is clear and immediate when students become really interested in their work through class discussion, as in a Year 11 geometry lesson when the humour in the responses to questions engaged the rapt attention of everyone. The work rate that followed was high. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but usually good in Years 10 and 11 as a result of the modular approach to GCSE assessment which begins in Year 10. Gifted and talented students are sometimes left with routine work for much of a lesson so that their possibility of gaining the highest grade at GCSE is restricted. Teachers generally manage students very well in Years 7 to 9 and use mathematical games to enliven learning and students' enjoyment of the work. However, in Year 9, a very small number of students make unsatisfactory progress because of weaknesses in class management. In Years 10 and 11, students are managed well and this contributes to the very good relationships seen in most lessons. Students' work is marked well. Homework is generally followed up in lesson time and it complements the classwork well.
90. Good leadership and management result in a clear direction for the department's work and a good team spirit, despite the current staffing situation in which many teachers contribute only a small amount of teaching in the subject. This good quality shows, for example, in the good focus on college-wide staff training for numeracy in the current year. Responsibilities are clearly defined and staff exchange and pursue ideas effectively about what works well. Relationships are

very good. While there is a sharp awareness of areas needing improvement, there is no written record of the future plans for the department. Generally, the staffing situation is managed well. The additional staff teaching mathematics in Year 7 are mainly, but not exclusively, science teachers. There are insufficient class textbooks for each of the non-specialist teachers to have their own copy and not enough time is given to supporting their work. Some Year 7 groups are taught by more than one teacher. Under these circumstances, learning is not as good as it is in many other lessons. This is an issue for the college. Subject documents do not always reflect what is currently happening, because of the good pace of change and development. Assessment arrangements are in a state of transition as the department moves to the use of laptop computers, now taking place across the college.

91. Since the last inspection standards at Year 9 and Year 11 have improved from average to above average. Basic numeracy has improved and is at least satisfactory for the majority of students. Students' behaviour has improved from good to very good. Teaching is now good rather than 'sound or better'. Access to ICT has improved. Overall the department has made good progress.

## SCIENCE

92. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching by an experienced staff
- The care for students' welfare and safety
- Good relationships
- Good level of practical work
- Good technical support

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient textbooks and apparatus
- Work is not planned well enough for different levels of attainment
- Assessment results are not used to aid planning or set individual targets
- No alternative accreditation is available for lower attainers in Years 10 and 11
- Level of technical support is too low for ten laboratories
- Lack of special needs support in lower teaching groups

*The new head of science took up his appointment ten days before the inspection.*

93. On entry to the college, students' early work reflects a variety of science experiences. Their previous attainment is broadly average in the Year 6 tests. However, in the work seen at the beginning of the autumn term, four months later, students in Year 7 are working below this standard. Results at the end of Year 9 are below the national average although the gap with national results has been closing. Boys performed better than girls in 1999 and 2000.
94. Students in Years 7 to 9 are taught in mixed ability groups, apart from a 'fast-track' group in Year 9. All of these mixed groups include students with special needs and students for whom English is an additional language. These students do as well as their classmates in practical work and when they are talking about their studies. When they are appropriately supported by learning assistants, their written work also matches that of the rest of the class. Without this support, these students do not always express themselves accurately and their written work falls behind. The

standard of experimental work is at least satisfactory and often good. Progress through the curriculum is steady although it varies in pace from one topic to another. Overall, in the work seen standards are average. Students' achievement is satisfactory.

95. Students' good attitudes to their work have a positive effect on their learning in Years 7 to 9 and they learn well. On occasion, learning is unsatisfactory because poor behaviour intervenes and progress slows. A very small minority of students who lack self-discipline sometimes attempt to take advantage and behave noisily while the teacher is involved with other students. In general this is quickly dealt with. When a topic relates to a personal interest or seizes students' imagination, the quality of learning rises immediately. For example in a lesson on forces, the teacher divided the class into groups with the task of planning the building of a pyramid for the Pharaoh's tomb, from quarrying the stone to the final burial. The resulting buzz of excitement sustained students' interest for the whole lesson and the rate of learning about such things as ramps, wedges and rollers rose markedly. This continued into the next lesson.
96. At the end of Year 11, the picture of boys out-performing girls is reversed, girls achieving better results than boys in the last two years. Results for the higher grades are about average. The results for students gaining a graded pass have been above the 2000 average in both 2000 and 2001. This is a considerable credit to the department since only a handful of students failed to obtain a grade. In 2001, this affected three students, representing considerable added value since Year 9. Standards in the work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average. Practical work is done competently and carefully with logical recording of results; this reflects the careful training in basic techniques that students are given from Year 7. Students' notebooks are neatly written and well presented, particularly in graphical work. Laboratory discipline is good throughout all years, and students observe the necessary safety precautions sensibly, once reminded of them. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.
97. Progress in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is steady and students' learning skills are satisfactory. The quality of learning is not good because, in some middle and lower teaching groups, while following instructions precisely and producing acceptable results, students do not take responsibility for checking that they really understand why or how a particular process works. Teachers do not let themselves be misled by the good concentration that students generally show and use effective, close questioning to uncover their level of understanding. Some lower attainers find it difficult to take readings accurately and do not appreciate that this can lead to false conclusions.
98. As in Years 7 to 9, a particular enthusiasm can raise the quality of learning greatly. A Year 10 group of boys, required to present a short learning sequence on methods of transferring heat energy, produced a stunning Powerpoint presentation on computer. This included colour illustrations, cartoon characters, animation, excellent scientific content, background music and effects and a voice-over commentary. The students involved had given full rein to their enthusiasm for ICT and raised the motivation and interest of the whole group. Students are well motivated, interested, and arrive expecting to enjoy their science lessons. They particularly look forward to experimental work and tackle it purposefully. Only when the tiny minority of students who lack self-discipline cause a disturbance does concentration falter. The offenders in this respect are frequently girls. A strong

feature of all lessons is the quality of relationships between students and their teachers. This results in a relaxed 'light touch' class discipline in which students feel confident to ask and answer questions and are not afraid to ask for help. The atmosphere encourages the less confident students to contribute voluntarily and more frequently.

99. Teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. In Years 10 and 11, teachers extend the range of strategies they employ, especially with lower teaching groups, and this results in added interest and often better learning. The range of practical exercises increases interest and motivation and teachers use their knowledge of students' particular enthusiasms and interests to move lessons forward. Occasionally, higher attainers were seen coping too easily with the tasks set, and there is a need for more challenging work to extend these individuals. For the majority of students, however, the pace of lessons is appropriate and there is plenty of challenge, both in theory and experimental work, and this keeps them thinking hard and building on past experience. Little use of numeracy skills was seen, apart from drawing graphs to show the results of experiments. Literacy skills are more frequently used, particularly when students have the opportunity to explain their investigational work. This requires accurate English and correct use of scientific vocabulary, and these are skills developed year by year. Homework was not set in many of the lessons seen, either because it had already been set or was not due. The homework seen was appropriate and carried out to a satisfactory standard. Student assessments take place regularly at the end of each unit of work, but there is no central record of these results and they do not contribute fully to forward planning. Target setting for each student is not in place.
100. The leadership of the department has been interrupted several times in the last few years, but with a new head of department taking up his post one week before the inspection, a period of stability and development is in sight. Overall the management is satisfactory. Four new laboratories have raised the standard of accommodation and the old mobile laboratories have been removed. Each teacher now has a permanent base and refurbished accommodation provides an encouraging environment in which to teach and learn. There is additional adjacent preparation and storage space, although some minor work is still needed to make the best use of these spaces. The level of resources in science is unsatisfactory. New textbooks are needed at least for Years 7 to 9, and much of the stock of apparatus is ageing and wearing out. For some topics, a shortage of equipment prevents two classes working on similar topics at the same time; for example, there are insufficient electrical meters to permit this. None of the deficiencies can be made good on the present departmental allowance. The science section of the school library is up to date and well used, despite there being few textbooks available.
101. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching is now good. Results in Year 9 are improving. At GCSE, the falling trend in results was halted in 2001, although the results did not improve as much as they did in most subjects. Of the eight issues raised in the last report, only two remain unresolved and both are under active consideration. The improvement in investigative work is good. Students now begin preparation for this in Years 7 to 9 and plenty of opportunities are provided for them to practise all aspects of investigations. Many were seen during this inspection. A study of submitted scripts showed a commendable standard by the end of Year 11. Students now use safety

goggles of an improved type. The storage of chemicals is now safe with the unwanted earlier surplus safely disposed of.

## ART AND DESIGN

102. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- Significant improvement in standards since the last inspection
- Above average standards by Year 9 and Year 11
- Very good relationships between teachers and students

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough opportunities for younger students to evaluate and respond to artists' work
- Some shortcomings in accommodation and learning resources although satisfactory overall

103. When they join the college, students' art and design skills are average. Because of very good teaching of skills such as drawing and painting, they make good progress in Years 7 to 9, so that by the end of Year 9, their achievement is good. Boys in particular benefit considerably from methodical, systematic teaching which ensures that all students can use two-dimensional media to draw well. Students work both from direct observation and from other visual sources to practise these skills and can represent what they see to their own satisfaction. Their subsequent explorations into colour work, using different media such as paint and pastels, work successfully as a consequence. This gives them confidence and capability and results in an enthusiastic 'can do' approach to practical work. By Year 9, teachers' assessment shows that girls' work is average, and boys' above average. This is mainly because of the high standards in drawing. As at the last inspection, students still experience art and design in blocks of time in rotation with design and technology, but the system no longer impedes progress. Department planning now minimises the potentially adverse effects of rotation, providing an appropriate balance of two- and three-dimensional work, the latter mostly in ceramics. Students' attainment in the construction of clay pots is above average. This is because of good direct teaching through demonstration, hands-on guidance and other methods, all of which help students to understand the medium well. Curriculum arrangements such as 60-minute single lessons and the relatively low proportion of time allocated to the subject, coupled with the rotation system, combine to limit the amount of critical studies work students undertake in Years 7 to 9. While these aspects are satisfactorily incorporated into planning, students undertake considerably less written and oral criticism than is usual and than is helpful for their progress. Those continuing with the subject to GCSE have too little prior experience of discussing or writing evaluatively about their own work and the work of well-known artists. This particularly disadvantages the achievement of gifted and talented students, who otherwise progress very well throughout the college. This dimension of their examination portfolios does not match the high standards of their practical work.

104. The standards seen in students' GCSE work in Years 10 and 11 reflect the significant improvement in the 2001 examination results. Standards overall are above average, with boys doing better than girls. The trend of improvement is continuing. From early in Year 10, students build on their good skills to explore visual ideas. They use good mark-making and refining skills which show well their individual response to the themes being studied. In Year 10, for example, students

studying still life were starting their project with high quality drawings of bottles and fruit, incorporating very well the themes of reflected light and reflected colour. In Year 10 graphics, despite changed plans necessitated by the late arrival of ICT equipment, some students were considering the impact of lettering and typefaces and creating good compositions with collage. Year 11 individual projects show very good development of practical work. For example, some students working in ceramics have created very delicately constructed clay lily flowers based on their studies of an artist's work. Other Year 11 students showed developing individuality and expressiveness in their painting and drawing stimulated by the still-life and portrait work. Students' highly positive attitudes and very good behaviour are significant factors in the progress they make in all years. They enjoy knowing that their good skills enable them to create pictures and artefacts of which they can rightly be proud. These attributes are found equally in students with special needs, in both boys and girls and in students from all ethnic backgrounds. The department is fully inclusive in helping all students to achieve their best.

105. The good learning is a consequence of the good teaching in all years. Students understand their teachers' high expectations well, mainly because of the very effective one-to-one tutoring sessions they receive in lessons. Teachers show them how to do things and explain at a level each individual can understand. They cajole, encourage and help students, stretching them to challenge themselves where they can. Demonstrations are clear, and pitched and paced extremely well, leaving students with clear guidance about what to do and why. The whole teaching team is now well qualified in art and design and students learn effectively from their knowledge. This is a notable improvement since the last inspection when non-specialist teachers were working in the department.
106. Timetable arrangements for art and design have the effect of creating self-contained blocks of experience in students' learning rather than a continuous, developmental experience. It is this, principally, which impedes their deeper learning of the historical and critical aspects. It is a credit to teaching that students retain their learning of skills as well as they do to maintain good standards. Art and design makes a strong contribution to developing students' mathematical learning through good teaching of spatial concepts, for example proportionality of the face in portraiture, and through perspective exercises in Year 9. Although technical vocabulary is satisfactorily developed orally, greater emphasis is needed on applying the language of the subject in the written aspects of the curriculum.
107. Department leadership is now good. Art and design is now managed as a separate department from design and technology, and clearly projects an appropriate subject ethos. Improving standards is the priority and is demonstrably being achieved. Accommodation is adequate, but the rooms are not adjacent so that students experience the subject in different sections rather than developing a feel for the inter-relatedness of art activities. Departmental plans to extend the use of ICT need to be implemented with haste so that computers become a natural tool for students' creative use. The department has made very good progress in improving standards and achievement and in the quality of teaching and learning. These have all improved significantly since 1996. National Curriculum requirements are now met.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

108. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Above average standards in food technology in Years 10 and 11
- Good teaching and learning of drawing skills
- Effective explanation of new work by teachers of food, resistant materials and textiles
- Very good relationships between teachers and students

### Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment information to monitor the students' progress and set targets for improvement
- Unsuitable time allocations to different aspects of the subject in Years 7 to 9
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts the range of teaching methods

109. There was a downward trend in GCSE examination results until 2000 when the proportion of students gaining higher grades was well below the national average. In 2001, results improved, although they were still below the national average for the previous year, except in food technology where they were above the previous year's average. Standards have improved as a result of both the college's analysis of the reasons why students did less well in design and technology than in other subjects, and of the department's action, including staff training, to make improvements. The standards reached by boys are lower than those of girls and lower than the national average but there was a small improvement in 2001. The proportion of students gaining a grade has remained close to the national average over the last three years.
110. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is below average. Students enter the school with varied experience in the subject but in general have insufficient understanding of the design process to plan and make good quality products. They make satisfactory progress in learning to design goods to meet consumer needs and demands, as well as in using safely a wide range of hand and machine tools. Students make particularly good progress in drawing skills so that they are able to communicate their ideas effectively when they are designing. However, inadequate time is allocated to teaching food technology, less than is given to other aspects of the subject, so that students do not reach appropriate standards in food lessons. Systems and control lessons have recently been introduced. Students are beginning to understand the function of basic components and how to assemble systems when they make, for example, moisture detectors. By Year 9, students design and make products such as mechanical toys, showing imagination in their design and an understanding of the mechanisms involved. They use sewing machines competently when making novelty hot water bottle covers. They take pride in finishing practical work well. While students evaluate their work and suggest how it might be improved, they have insufficient understanding of the process and are highly dependent on teachers to guide them to conclusions.
111. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall and in most aspects of the subject. Students gain knowledge and experience of using the design process to plan and make products from a variety of materials. They do not learn to use the process independently however, so that by the end of the Year 9 they remain too heavily dependent on teachers' guidance. They make significant progress in drawing skills and gain knowledge of different ways to communicate ideas through, for example, isometric and exploded drawings. Students make satisfactory progress in textiles lessons. They learn to adapt a basic idea into one which is unique to themselves, for example when decorating fabrics using appliqué and



different kinds of stitching. In electronics, students follow instructions to assemble circuits, but they do not fully understand what is happening or retain knowledge of the function of components. Students with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress because they are effectively supported and suitably challenged in most aspects of the subject.

112. Students have good attitudes to learning; they are well behaved and listen attentively in lessons. This contributes positively to the quality of their learning and the pride they take in finishing practical work to a good standard and presenting written work clearly and attractively. Students are trustworthy and take good care of equipment. This is evident in the well-preserved nature of some elderly resources.
113. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is below average, except in food technology and in practical skills in resistant materials where standards are average. By Year 11, students make products which are well constructed and finished and meet the purpose for which they are intended. For example, they make storage boxes which are appropriately designed to hold toys and are attractively finished to appeal to young children. In food technology, students have a good knowledge of nutrition which they use to plan and cook meals for different consumer needs, such as vegetarian diets or general family meals. They know how to adapt recipes to meet particular needs because they have a good knowledge of ingredients and how they work. However, in electronics, students have insufficient knowledge of basic concepts and circuit components to work independently. They rely too much on instructions from the teacher and on following ideas from sources such as books when they make products, for example, alarm systems. Students do not currently follow courses in textiles at this stage.
114. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and the trend of improvement in examination results continues as teachers put into practice the knowledge they have gained to raise standards. In food technology in particular, students make rapid progress in both basic and advanced skills in preparing food, making up for insufficient experience in earlier years to achieve as well as they could. In resistant materials, students acquire more advanced construction skills and make satisfactory progress in designing products to meet the needs and demands of consumers, for example in work on lighting projects. Students do not make enough progress in electronics because most do not understand the work sufficiently to be able to retain knowledge. This is largely because the work is presented in a way which is too difficult for most students to understand. Higher attainers who do understand the concepts make satisfactory progress and work independently to plan their own systems or modify standard ones.
115. Students have good attitudes to learning and, except for rare instances, behave well in lessons. They are keen to do well and maintain their coursework folders in a well-organised manner, with information clearly presented. In food technology, their keenness enables them to catch up with work not covered in previous years and to achieve as they should. In resistant materials, students are keen to work creatively but only a small minority demonstrate flair and imagination in their designs.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and often good, but there are some significant improvements to be made. Students learn to draw well and to communicate their ideas graphically because they are effectively taught these skills throughout the school and encouraged to present work clearly and attractively in all aspects of the subject. This helps them to communicate their ideas effectively when

their language skills are below average. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and all are appropriately qualified and experienced. They explain new work well so that students are interested, listen and understand. Students acquire a satisfactory technical vocabulary with which to explain their own work because new words are introduced when appropriate. They develop numeracy skills which support their learning in design and technology, as well as their general understanding of shape and measurement, because teachers insist on accuracy of measurement and relate this to the quality of products. In electronics lessons, however, new work is not always communicated effectively to all students so that there are gaps in understanding and the lower attainers become restless.

117. Teachers provide students with appropriately challenging projects but theoretical work is not always sufficiently integrated into practical tasks to ensure that they learn efficiently. In food technology, the good balance of practical and written tasks and new learning, such as the relevance of industrial practice, is more successfully integrated into practical work. Students are aware of the National Curriculum levels they reach at the end of each project because work is regularly assessed at this point. However, there is insufficient monitoring of progress and target setting during each project to encourage students to aim for higher levels. Good quality learning in lessons is encouraged because relationships between teachers and students are very good and there is evident mutual respect. In most lessons, teachers effectively build on previous learning and explain how new work is linked to students' previous experience.
118. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although staff successfully encourage the use of computers for researching information and presenting it effectively, there are insufficient resources for computer control technology and computer aided design and manufacture. In consequence, full use is not made of the staff expertise available in the department. This limits students' achievement. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and often restricts the range of teaching methods which staff can safely employ. The two part-time technicians make an effective contribution to the maintenance of accommodation and resources and to the smooth running of the department.
119. Since the last inspection, satisfactory improvement has been made in the quality of teaching and, in consequence, standards are being raised. There is now a clearer and more unified vision for the future of the department and the curriculum has been widened to include control technology. Minimal progress has been made with improvements to accommodation, which is having an adverse effect on teaching and learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and help them to learn well
- The subject is well led and competently managed
- Students progress well because teachers are supportive and helpful
- Standards, particularly boys' results at GCSE in 2001, are improving

- Accommodation is excellent

#### Areas for improvement

- Lack of fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 and a coherent ICT programme in Years 7 to 11
- Quality of marking is patchy
- Lack of learning tasks involving enquiry methods, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- Not enough use of visual materials and methods

121. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average in Years 7 to 9. These standards are achieved because the teaching is sound and students' attitudes to learning are positive. Students' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, students have received a good grounding in geographical skills. Most, except for a small number of lower attainers, use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps satisfactorily. However, more practice is needed earlier in the course in the presentation and analysis of statistical data using graphs. Higher and average attainers' knowledge of location is sound. However, students of all abilities show a limited understanding of spatial patterns. In Years 7 to 9, progress is good for lower and average attainers but in some lessons higher attainers are insufficiently challenged. Gifted and talented students are now being suitably extended. When provided with specialist support, students with special needs make good progress but at other times their progress is only satisfactory because tasks are not adequately adapted to meet their needs.
122. Standards of work are broadly average in Years 10 and 11. Students' achievement is good. By the end of Year 11, higher attainers explain well a range of physical and human processes. Average attainers can describe these processes but have less understanding of their geographical significance. Although generally progressing well, students rely too heavily on their teachers and this restricts their personal development. The best independent study projects for GCSE are of very high quality and students of average and below average attainment produce coursework appropriate to their ability. The good progress in Years 10 and 11 is due to the subject being taught by experienced specialist teachers. A number of positive measures have been taken to improve achievement; including the provision of a very useful project study handbook, increased revision and examination materials, and a more structured and well-monitored approach to supporting boys who are identified as underachieving.
123. GCSE results at the higher grades have improved so that they are broadly average. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades is below average but there was a significant improvement in 2001. Girls usually perform better than boys, but in 2001, the gap was less than the national difference. This reflects the success of the support given to improving the performance of underachieving boys. Recent results for a graded pass are above average.
124. Students' attitudes to learning are good and most display a real interest in their work. They are attentive, work conscientiously and respond productively to teaching across the attainment range. Students' behaviour is usually very good and is often exemplary. Relationships with teachers are constructive and frequently a real rapport is evident that contributes significantly to students' progress. Boys and girls of all ethnic groups relate very well to each other and relationships are harmonious. Students' individual responses to questions are often good but a greater response in class discussion needs nurturing. Oral skills are not sufficiently well developed. Asian boys contribute more in lesson discussion than Asian girls while white UK

heritage girls tend to participate more than white UK heritage boys, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Generally, Asian boys have a more positive attitude to their studies than UK heritage boys who are often reluctant workers.

125. Teaching and learning overall are good and some very good teaching was observed. The quality is generally satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is good in Years 10 and 11, where specialists teach the subject and help students to acquire new knowledge and skills progressively throughout the course. Asian boys and girls, in particular, apply themselves well to their learning, show high aspirations and most want to do well at school. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge. Class management and control, built on a foundation of good relationships, are of a very high standard. Learning is most effective when lessons have clear and manageable aims that are shared with students at the start of the lesson and are reviewed at the end to ensure that they have been met. Best learning occurs when lessons are imaginatively and thoroughly planned and when they offer a variety of suitable practical activities that require students to involve themselves in their learning. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of the topics they teach, set an effective pace and have high expectations. The good quality of learning is also directly linked to the well-structured and focused nature of the teaching. When visual aids are used such as video extracts, maps and graphs, learning is noticeably better. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson when students were required to draw accurately a compound graph of the annual temperature and rainfall of Leicester and assess the seasonal pattern and range that occurs. There was an exceptionally high standard of presentation and understanding of the trends identified.
126. Learning is not sufficiently backed up, however, through displaying the findings visually on the board or overhead projector. Local Ordnance Survey maps, local examples, enquiry tasks and group work are not used sufficiently, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Schemes of work do not always identify visual stimulus material such as atlases, film and maps to illustrate teaching points. Although no policy exists for literacy or numeracy, the teaching of these basic skills is satisfactory and in some lessons is very well developed. Fieldwork provided locally in Year 7 and in Bede Island and the Ratcliffe Power Station in Year 10 greatly enriches students' studies. However, fieldwork is inadequate overall in Years 7 to 9 as it does not cover a study of a physical landscape or an area outside the local area as required. ICT has seen little development since the last inspection. Restricted access to suitable computer facilities has been a drawback in the past but new facilities have been provided recently. The department needs now to establish a coherent and workable programme of ICT skills to ensure that requirements over all years are met.
127. The department is effectively run and competently managed. Policies are sound and measures are in place to improve standards of teaching, learning and raise student achievement. Teaching and learning are regularly reviewed but the impact of teaching and staff training on the quality of students' learning is not adequately analysed. The assessment policy has a sharp focus on monitoring students' progress, setting targets for improvement and evaluating practice. These are good features. However, marking of students' work is variable in quality, ranging from detailed, high quality, valuable comments which clearly help students to progress, to very poorly marked work with little or no comment or grade for attainment. There were a few books not marked at all, which is wholly unsatisfactory. The accommodation, in new purpose-built specialist rooms that provide sufficient space for investigatory work, is excellent. Wall displays provide for a stimulating learning

environment. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are some serious shortfalls such as the need for individual textbooks for students in Years 7 to 9 and a fieldwork budget. Each specialist teaching room lacks a video monitor and overhead projector as standard equipment to broaden the range of teaching and learning methods.

128. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in most areas identified for action in the last report. These include teaching and learning, curriculum development and the standards achieved throughout the school. There is good capacity to develop further the work of the department to meet the points identified in this report.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results now above average
- Students achieve well
- Good learning because of good teaching and stimulating activities
- Emphasis on improving literacy skills is a strength
- Department considerably improved and now well led
- Good behaviour, very good relationships, students enthusiastic about their work

### Areas for improvement

- Patchy marking and planning for different abilities in Years 7 to 9
- Assessment results in Years 7 to 9 lack precision and are not used sufficiently to set individual learning targets
- Lack of policies for key areas such as literacy and assessment

130. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7, which was below average. Boys perform less well than girls, but not as markedly as indicated by teachers' assessments for 2001. These results also indicated overall standards as well above the average. The department acknowledges the need for greater precision in moderating assessments to National Curriculum levels.

131. In Years 7 to 9, students of all abilities have a good knowledge and understanding of key events and chronology. The strong emphasis on developing students' literacy is promoting competent skills of selecting and recording evidence from sources. Lower attainers and those with special needs are generally helped in this by resources which match their learning needs, although this is not consistently happening across the department. Students for whom English is an additional language are effectively helped by learning assistants and make satisfactory progress. Higher attainers in Year 8 analyse conflicting sources of evidence well, for example recognising bias and reliability in interpreting the reasons for the Princes being murdered in the Tower. Higher attainers in Year 9 write at length with clarity and understanding when presenting well-researched assignments. Average and lower attainers have less developed skills of extended writing from different points of view as fewer opportunities are provided.

132. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. This is reflected in the proportion of students achieving higher GCSE grades in 2000. GCSE results for 2001 have risen above the national average for 2000. All students gained a grade. This is much improved since the last inspection. Improvement has been particularly significant over the last three years, especially in the performance of boys: they now do as well as girls and better than boys nationally. This represents good achievement compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9. It is largely due to: closer monitoring of student's progress; the setting of regular and thoroughly marked tests, which provide targets for improvement; the strong student motivation; and building successfully on the sound skills of enquiry and writing developed by Year 9. Nearly all students can compare changes in medicine over different periods in history. Higher attainers evaluate sources well and write fluently and analytically at length, using well-chosen quotations.
133. Students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are always good and often very good. They respond equally well across the year groups. This is encouraged by the good ethos in the school, the high expectations of teachers and their successful management of classroom behaviour. It also reflects the very good relationships between staff and students. Students of all abilities listen carefully, settle quickly to work and co-operate well with each other and the teacher. They readily work in pairs, showing respect for each other's views. There is a strong motivation to do well. This is exemplified in the pride taken in their work, their tenacity at sticking to challenging tasks and the extra work done at home. It also leads to a determination to complete work to the best of their ability. For example, students with the highest level of special needs enthusiastically and successfully recorded evidence onto a grid from a difficult written source, with the valuable help of a learning support teacher.
134. Teaching and learning are good. In no lessons were they unsatisfactory. Students generally make good progress in acquiring secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. They learn important new skills of enquiry, organisation and, for the higher attainers, analysis and interpretation of evidence. This is due to careful planning of a variety of challenging activities by well-qualified and experienced staff. The strong emphasis on promoting literacy skills particularly helps lower attainers and those with special needs to progress. For example, Year 9 students had to select key words from a written source about 18<sup>th</sup> century agricultural reformers, summarise them in a grid and then write up in paragraphs the importance of each. Students work enthusiastically at a steady pace and their output is good. This is promoted by their strong motivation and the high expectations of the teachers, who manage time well, especially in setting deadlines for tasks. The students' strong interest is encouraged by the teachers setting challenging tasks which actively involve them. Year 7 students enjoyed the lively humour of the teacher when placing four of them in chronological order at the front of the room. This stimulus then prompted good work in pairs in arranging key events in order to develop their skills of sequencing and speaking, both identified as a weakness in the last report. Students also know what they are doing and why, as the objectives of the lesson are clearly written on the board and explained. Teachers use effective questioning, involving a range of students, to check their understanding. Students in Years 10 and 11 are aware of their predicted GCSE grades, their current performance and how to improve. This is due to regular monitoring of work with mini-tests, thorough and helpful marking and checks on coursework. The progress of boys is being advanced particularly well by these strategies.

135. Students in Years 7 to 9 are less aware of their progress in relation to National Curriculum levels, as these are not adequately used in feedback after assessments. Nor is there the same consistency of thorough marking in these years as there is for older students. Learning is also less effective when the pace of teaching slows and output and interest consequently falter. The department has many resources to match the learning needs of all students. They are used well to stretch the gifted and talented students. There is not the same consistency in using suitable resources for lower attainers and those with special needs.
136. The subject is well managed and nearly all the issues raised in the previous report have been addressed. ICT is now more systematically delivered with planned provision in the schemes of work using the much improved facilities in the new block. A departmental development plan now reflects the college's priorities and provides targets for improvement. Classroom observations have monitored teaching and learning. Evaluation of the findings should help to disseminate the good practice that exists to all staff. Assessment procedures have much improved with central monitoring of all students. Using the results to complete a portfolio of students' work and to inform the students in Years 7 to 9 how to improve their National Curriculum level, is still undeveloped. Departmental policies are missing for certain key aspects, such as assessment, literacy and numeracy. This weakens the department's focus and does not record the many good practices that already exist.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

137. Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Good computer network provision
- Good planning across the curriculum
- Good relationships between staff and students
- A good range of ICT skills now taught
- Good behaviour

#### Areas for improvement

- Limited staff guidance on planning suitable work for different attainment levels
- Assessment and students' annual reports
- Too little use of ICT to raise standards in all subjects

138. Standards are average in the work seen at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. The college has not offered ICT as an examination option in previous years. Since September 2001, however, all students follow courses in either GCSE information technology or a GNVQ course at intermediate level. Standards are average as a result of the basic skills students cover, both in specialist ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 and within the examination courses in Year 10. Students' skills are also developed through the use of computers in other subjects; this is reported below. The college has invested heavily in the development of a new college-wide computer network, which has benefited the development of all students' ICT skills.
139. Teachers' formal assessment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicates that standards are above average. This does not fully match the level of work seen during the inspection, which was broadly average. However, this standard shows good achievement from students' standards when they join the college. In Year 7, students are introduced to a broad range of ICT skills, starting with word-processing,

editing text and combining graphics and text for desktop publishing. In Years 8 and 9, they increase their knowledge of spreadsheets by setting up models to explore various situations, for example designing a seating plan for a theatre, in order to calculate overall costs and profit. Students in Year 9 develop skills in using databases. In some curriculum subjects, they research information using CD-ROMs as well as the Internet. Students at all levels of attainment including those with special needs achieve competence in the basic research skills using ICT. This is achieved by students for whom English is an additional language. Higher attainers show independence in the way they work and complete tasks faster than others. However, they are not always sufficiently challenged by the tasks. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where students were covering basic keyboard skills. Many students, particularly boys, found most of the work too easy because they had already covered similar work in their primary schools. None the less, the teacher provided a good structure to the tasks to enable students to demonstrate the level they had reached. There were missed opportunities for higher attainers to use their initiative or show the more advanced skills they had acquired. However, lower attainers covered a good range of basic techniques with good support from the teacher.

140. In work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are broadly average. All students, including those with special needs, achieve well. Students following the GNVQ intermediate course use ICT to research their work and utilise a range of skills to process and present their coursework. Folders showed good evidence of students using spreadsheets to process and present data on healthy lifestyles and showed progress in their use of these skills. Many students use ICT effectively in their GCSE coursework, for example in physical education and science. They use spreadsheets to process data and present the results in the form of graphs and charts, noting changes and trends. Students are taught to use specialist ICT software to prepare presentations on chosen subjects for various audiences. In preparing the information, students are guided to select the most important points and to structure their presentations clearly. They explain their work using a good range of technical vocabulary, which they apply accurately. Students at all levels of attainment use computers to process and present the data they have collected. However, the use of computers to improve the quality and presentation of work and to raise standards further is not consistently in place across all subjects.
141. There is a good learning ethos in the department. Students generally show mature attitudes to their work. They form good relationships with each other, the teachers and other adults within the department. This has had a beneficial effect on their learning. Students work in a mature way, asking their teachers for help when they need it, both in lessons and outside lesson time. The ICT rooms are well organised and students show a business-like approach when using the range of resources available within the department.
142. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan and prepare well and are well organised. In those lessons where the learning was good, the teachers set clear targets, which helped students to be certain about what was expected and to plan their work independently. Learning was good when teachers structured lessons well. For example, in Year 9, students were designing a ticket system for a theatre. The teacher provided a good structure for the tasks and guided students on the use of the software. All students created the spreadsheet, and entered the seating plan and formula to calculate the numbers of seats to be sold. All achieved the basic skills needed. Students use correct technical vocabulary when talking



about their work and teachers use a range of methods to ensure that students develop a wide range of terms and knowledge in specialist ICT lessons. This is particularly important for students with below average reading skills as this helps them to acquire a wide and relevant vocabulary. Students also read from a range of texts when using books, CD-ROMs and the Internet for researching their work. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and generally use questions effectively to assess how much students understand and retain. Students show good levels of concentration as a result of this active questioning which challenges them to extend their thinking and to increase their participation in the lesson. Teachers have high expectations and the students respond well to this when working in the department. Higher attainers, however, are not always well challenged because teaching resources do not match their needs. Small groups of boys show less interest in using textbooks and other information to check that they researched all the important facts necessary for completing the tasks. Teachers are aware of this difficulty and have started to develop a range of strategies to engage the boys more effectively in the tasks. Teachers have good relationships with the students and encourage their participation in activities effectively.

143. The use of computers in other subjects is satisfactory, although in most it is at a basic level. In science, students use spreadsheets to process and present the data they have prepared in class. They use a specialist programme to design and test electronic circuits and use ICT to make formal presentations. In design and technology, students use control technology, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and the Internet to research information. Their experiences are limited, however, by the low level of resources available. In English, students use ICT to draft their work, edit it and redraft it, now an integral part of the process of raising achievement. Year 7 students use the Internet well to research autobiographies of famous people. In history, students use the Internet for research and revision; for example, Year 7 students researched information about the Romans and Year 8 students worked on the Tudors. This was planned within the schemes of work for history. In mathematics, students use a good range of skills including spreadsheets, databases, a specialist program to draw mathematical shapes and another to explore graphs and charts. In physical education, students use ICT well to process and present their GCSE coursework. During the inspection, good use of ICT was seen in modern languages where Year 8 students use word-processing skills. In geography, students use CD-ROMs to gather information and for GCSE revision. Good examples of work were seen in religious education where students use desktop publishing to present their GCSE coursework and use the Internet for research. In art and design and music, the use of ICT is satisfactory.
144. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and through sharing the findings of this the development of teaching has been supported well. There has been considerable investment to upgrade computer provision which is now better than the national picture. Technician support is good; the technicians make a very positive contribution to the work of the department as well as supporting students well in lessons.
145. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. The increase in the number of computers has resulted in better access for students, although across departments, staff laptops are still being used mainly for lesson preparation and administration purposes. Timetabling rotations still prevent some students from getting equal access to ICT lessons. Teaching and learning are now good.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

146. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**.

### Strengths

- Above average standards by Year 9, well above by Year 11
- Good teaching and students' positive attitudes result in good learning
- Achievement is good

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough opportunities for students to speak the language in lessons
- Results of assessment not taken sufficiently into account in planning
- Unsuitable use of music rooms for languages teaching

147. Standards in the work seen in Years 7 to 9, in both French and German, are above average, although the 2000 teacher assessments showed standards to be below average. Students have very good recall of their previous learning. Listening skills are particularly well developed. All students respond confidently to the spoken languages and identify the main points and specific detail from extracts of speech at near normal speed. Higher attainers need little repetition; they interpret more complex instructions for others. Lower attainers and students with special needs sometimes find listening activities difficult because they are not always given sufficient guidance on how to listen. All students take part successfully in short dialogues to give or gather information. For example in Year 7, students give information about themselves using set phrases. In Years 8 and 9, they ask for travel information and exchange information about the school day. They play games and sing songs in French and German. They express opinions and higher attainers can justify their views. Pronunciation is usually very good. By the beginning of Year 9, students describe events in the past, present and future, both in speech and writing. The majority has a good understanding of the way the languages work and can explain patterns using correct linguistic terms accurately. They identify the main points and detail from a variety of short texts including, for example, train and school timetables; they write accurately for a variety of purposes, including letters. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, showing good increases in knowledge and understanding and good development of skills. Students with special needs make satisfactory progress. Those receiving language support make good progress, as do gifted and talented students.

148. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average. They are lower than shown in the 2001 GCSE results but it is clear that all students make rapid progress as they approach the examinations. This is because of the help they receive with their preparation. At GCSE, girls do as well in French as in they do in all their other subjects and boys do better in both French and German. The proportion of students entered for examination is higher than the proportion nationally. There has been a significant and sustained improvement in examination results since the previous inspection, which continued in 2001. Students build successfully upon the firm foundations established in Years 7 to 9. They consolidate and extend the range of structures and vocabulary they can deal with in reading, writing, speaking and listening. They transfer language from one topic to another. Higher attainers increase their independence in manipulating the language for themselves. They take part in interviews, exchange information about holiday accommodation, describe and explain their relationships with their families and describe events in

detail. They do this using a good range of vocabulary and structures that utilise different tenses in responding to questions. Students take care over their written work, which is usually well presented and accurate. Average and higher attainers write at length and in detail on a variety of topics, for example to describe their holidays or plans for the future. Lower attainers and students with special needs use set phrases, adapting them to suit their needs. Higher attainers construct their own sentences in accordance with grammar rules. All students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

149. Most students in all years have positive attitudes towards their learning. They settle quickly, listen attentively and concentrate on the given tasks. Students are usually well behaved and although a small number of Year 9 boys displayed some poor behaviour and tried to disrupt one of their lessons, this was unusual. However, when students are required to listen to the teacher for lengthy periods or cannot easily follow the activities, they sometimes become restless or chatty and lose concentration. They quickly regain interest when they are asked to complete tasks themselves. In most lessons, students are encouraged to work in pairs and in the most successful lessons, to work independently at their own pace. When working as individuals, for example on computers, they stay on task, set their own pace and try to solve problems for themselves before asking for help. When conditions were difficult because of technical problems, some Year 8 students were very patient and used their initiative to overcome the difficulties. Students in Years 7 and 8 enjoyed playing games and singing songs in French and German. In Year 11, students showed enjoyment and appreciation in a French lesson about part-time jobs, which was conducted with humour.
150. Teaching and learning in both French and German are good overall, and often very good. Students' listening skills progress very well in both languages because the language is used effectively throughout lessons. Teachers have very good command of their specialist language. Consequently students hear very good role models so that their pronunciation and intonation are very good and they respond promptly. Teachers are good at checking that all students understand and at challenging higher attainers to interpret more complex instructions for others.
151. Students are usually well behaved and keen to do well because their teachers have high expectations. Well-ordered activities enable students to build successfully on previous learning. They are encouraged from their earliest language lessons to participate and to try to work out meanings for themselves; as a result they are confident linguists. They understand what is required of them and identify patterns in the languages themselves, helped by the very good use of resources such as the overhead projector and flashcards. Students rapidly apply the patterns for themselves and respond successfully because of the careful and effective questioning by their teachers. Boys in Year 9 are successfully encouraged to participate in oral work by the competitive nature of some oral activities. In most lessons, students' confidence and competence in using the language increase because they are given frequent opportunities to use it informally with a partner. There are good opportunities, particularly in Year 7, for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, these include incorporating simple sums in games, encouraging students to apply familiar routines to learn new language, identifying and displaying key words, using rhythm to aid memory and developing ways of helping students to work out the meaning of unfamiliar language. Higher attainers are given good guidance about how to improve their

written work but this is not consistently done across the department nor given to all students.

152. Effective use of ICT helps students to increase their understanding of patterns in the languages and work at their own pace in developing reading and writing skills. Students make rapid progress, maintaining their interest and concentration, because activities are conducted at a brisk pace. Where progress is slower, activities go on too long and limit the opportunities for students to work independently or informally on speaking skills. Some students, particularly girls, are reluctant to speak in front of the class; some have difficulty in maintaining concentration when not directly involved in activities. Some lower attainers and students with special needs have difficulty in dealing with listening tasks, for example when materials and resources are not sufficiently adapted to meet their needs.
153. The department is well led with a strong commitment to raising standards. The head of department has a clear vision of the way forward and teachers work well as a team, sharing ideas and achieving a high degree of consistency in their work. Teaching and learning are closely monitored, and prompt action is taken to make improvements. The department keeps up to date with current developments. Accommodation is unsatisfactory: some lessons are taught away from the languages area and several are taught in the music area where the noise from adjacent rooms makes listening and speaking difficult. Learning resources are satisfactory but those to enable students to learn independently at their own pace, such as ICT and listening centres, are inadequate. Assessment procedures are good with frequent tests which track progress. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is effectively linked to GCSE grades; students are given a clear indication of the standards they are achieving and how to improve. However, in Years 7 to 9, teachers underestimate students' attainment and do not involve students sufficiently in tracking and planning their own progress through the National Curriculum levels. The schemes of work are not sufficiently linked to levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 and do not give clear guidance about how groups of differing ability within teaching groups can achieve well.
154. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made. Standards achieved in all years have improved, and results in GCSE examinations in both French and German have improved significantly and continue to rise. The quality of teaching has also improved and the department has made a good start in developing the use of ICT across the department to support and extend learning.

## MUSIC

155. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers know their subject well
- Good computer provision
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9

#### Areas for improvement

- Organised activities at lunchtime are limited
- Lesson planning lacks well-pitched learning targets and timings for activities
- Assessment in lessons and over time
- Low take-up for GCSE music
- Low take-up of instrumental lessons

156. In recent years, a small number of students have taken GCSE music. Most gained higher grades. In 2000, of the 11 who were entered, four gained an A grade and five a grade C.
157. Standards in the work seen in Years 7 to 9 are below average. This represents good achievement from students' standards when they join Year 7 which overall are low. Students show little familiarity with using percussion instruments and limited knowledge of musical terms. Both girls and boys sing with enthusiasm but little accuracy when learning a new song. Students' progress from Year 7 is shown in the small number of examples of their work on tape. Year 8 groups, working on music in a Chinese style, showed that they can combine different musical strands of pitch and rhythm and improvise using the pentatonic scale. Year 9 composed pieces using ideas from Indian classical music; they showed a better grasp of its rhythmic structures than of those of pitch. Too little attention is paid to the expressive effects of dynamics and to the structure of their compositions to reach the level expected for 14 year olds. There is no difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls or by different ethnic groups. Students with special needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress.
158. Standards are average in Years 10 and 11 and achievement is satisfactory. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress. No students with special needs or who are receiving language support are taking music. Students in Years 10 and 11 use computers and the specialist software confidently. Several have the software on their own computers. The ease with which they produce complex pieces using ICT masks some basic weaknesses in their musical knowledge. For example, in discussion they could not clearly explain harmonic progression and modulation. Their knowledge of basic structures, forms and compositional devices such as imitation, is not clearly understood. However, they are not short of ideas. Year 10 students came up with a suitable motif and recorded it on the computer in readiness for further development. Although most of the students studying GCSE have instrumental lessons, no performance work took place in the lessons seen.
159. Students approach music with enthusiasm and a small number are keen to continue their work at lunchtime. During lessons, particularly in the earlier years, they work well in groups, sharing ideas and discussing strategies for completing compositions. Behaviour is good and this paves the way for good learning because students are prepared to work hard. For the size of school, very few students take up the opportunity to learn an instrument despite the wide range of orchestral and Asian instruments offered through Leicester's 'Arts in Education'. However, students in Year 7 have so far responded well to the 'Gifted and Talented' initiative of a year's lessons free of charge. Only small numbers of students have taken music to GCSE level, smaller than is usual, although the group size has grown to 15 in the present Year 10.

160. As the college has been unable to recruit a suitable teacher to the vacant full-time teaching post, temporary arrangements were in place during the inspection week. As a consequence, while teaching is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in important areas. Teaching in one lesson in Years 7 to 9 was unsatisfactory and in one lesson in Years 10 and 11 was good. Students lack a sense of urgency in their work because the expectation of what they could achieve during the lesson is not shared. Because their work is not assessed rigorously, not everyone does the best they can. A number of students have been identified as having a talent for music but no special plans are made to develop their talent. Students at the early stages of special needs do not receive learning support in music lessons. Students' good behaviour and desire to please is often mistaken for good learning and teachers' evaluation of work and effort is over generous.
161. Strengths in teaching arise from good subject skills and the quality of relationships with students. Detailed knowledge of musical repertoire enables teachers to choose appropriate topics and pieces of music for study, and to present them in an interesting way. Teachers are up to date with music technology and use this for demonstration and to help students to record and improve their own work.
162. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Music is managed within the performing arts faculty. A new head of faculty has been in post since the beginning of the current term. Priorities for improvement, such as target setting and more focused use of National Curriculum levels in assessment, have been identified but it is too early for any detailed planning to have taken place. The needed improvements identified in 1996 have not been dealt with; this is unsatisfactory. There is still a need to improve the quality of teaching. Although there are benefits from the community use of the music department by having the Music Centre orchestra and other ensembles rehearse there, college students do not have enough opportunities to make music together on a regular basis in vocal and instrumental groups.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

163. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Good relationships
- Good range of outdoor facilities
- Successes of teams and individuals, particularly boys
- Rising standards

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient suitable indoor accommodation for the curriculum in Years 7 to 9
- Cramped changing rooms
- Low take-up of after-school activities by girls
- Fouling of playing fields by dogs is a health hazard
- Year 9 assessments are too severe
- Some Year 10 marking lacks helpful comment

164. There has been a general trend of improvement since the last inspection although the proportion of students gaining higher grades at GCSE in 2000 was well below average. Unusually, no girls took the course in that year. Most students gained better grades in this subject than they did overall in their other subjects. Provisional 2001 results match the national averages for 2000. Evidence from the inspection confirms that standards are rising. This is true in lessons and in individual and team performance, usually involving boys, at local, district and county levels. It includes badminton, cricket, football, hockey and athletics. Teachers' formal 2001 assessments at the end of Year 9, the first occasion when physical education levels were used, were too severe.
165. By Year 9, students show good performance skills. Weaknesses in catching and throwing, which are evident up to the start of Year 8, have been overcome by improving students' understanding of basic techniques. Students have good ball control in hockey but only a minority makes effective use of available space. Students explain the strengths and weaknesses in their own performances and in those of others. They set high, but realistic, targets for themselves, for example in circuit training, and are highly supportive of each other's efforts. Students at all levels of attainment, both boys and girls, including those with special needs, make good progress over Years 7 to 9. Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress. In general, students progress well because they enjoy lessons, the fact that activities test and extend their understanding and skills, and also because they have positive relationships with teachers and with each other.
166. In Years 10 and 11, students following GCSE courses demonstrate good skills in games such as football. They build on the technical skills learned in earlier years and develop effective attacking and defensive strategies. Although highly competitive, students always observe the principles of fair play. They are strongly supportive of each other and praise each other's successes. The good quality of practical skills is not always matched by the standards in written work. Students often fail to answer questions fully enough to show how much they know and understand. They make appropriate use of ICT to improve the presentation of coursework and make satisfactory use of a range of technical terms. In the general curriculum for all students, standards are satisfactory in games such as hockey and football. The high levels of enjoyment that students display in working with each other and with teachers are a strength of the work in the department.
167. In all year groups, achievement is good because students enjoy their work and want to improve. All are encouraged by their awareness that other students as well as their teachers will be supportive of their efforts and will judge them against their individual aptitudes. Students listen carefully to teachers and to each other. They observe demonstrations with good understanding so that they develop technical skills quickly. Behaviour is very good. Some students known to experience behaviour difficulties at other times make good progress in physical education because they are interested, believe they can succeed and know they will be encouraged. Although most students are competitive, they always observe the principles of fair play and are never reckless in relation to the safety of others. They value the quality of the sports hall and the outdoor provision. Those students whose lessons are taught in the hall are tolerant of the time they lose because the area has to be cleared after assemblies or prepared for lunch. They behave sensibly in the cramped changing rooms. The positive attitudes of boys are reflected in the high proportion taking part in activities at lunchtime and after school.

Although girls enjoy lessons as much as boys do, they participate far less in extra-curricular activities. This was noted in the last report and no solution has been found.

168. Teaching and learning are good. Students sustain high levels of effort and concentration so that progress in lessons is good. This is because teachers provide a variety of activities and ensure that all students, at all levels of attainment, are appropriately helped. For example, there was very good progress in football when teachers set tasks which demanded skilful response and in Year 9 circuit training, where girls set exacting targets for themselves. Because students want to develop their skills, they listen carefully to teachers whose knowledge they respect. They observe demonstrations by their classmates and teachers with growing confidence in their ability to recognise significant features. The quality of learning is also improved by the clear links with earlier work that teachers make at the start of lessons and the review of what has been learned at the end. The learning of all students, especially those at the extremes of the attainment range, benefits from the praise received from classmates and teachers for their successes.
169. The work of the department benefits from good leadership and the good standards of teachers' specialist knowledge. Teachers respond well to their awareness of the special needs of individuals, of those with limited experience of English and those with particular talents. They consistently provide appropriate challenge for students at all levels of attainment and celebrate their achievements. In these respects, the department reflects the aims and values of the school. Good teaching and learning are effectively supported by the quality and range of outdoor facilities, although the 'all weather' pitch cannot be used in some conditions. Lack of suitable indoor accommodation other than the very good sports hall means that schemes of work are dominated by games. The curriculum for students below Year 10 does not have an appropriate balance of activities. Solution of this problem will require additional resources.
170. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The college continues to make effective use of off-site facilities for swimming in Year 7. Standards are rising. Students are now more confident in evaluating the quality of their own work and that of others. Girls show more enthusiasm in lessons. The quality of teaching is more consistently good. Assessment of students' work continues to vary in quality, however. Teachers have good understanding of individuals' strengths and weaknesses but, in Years 7 to 9, tend to underrate students' attainment in comparison with national standards. Although some improvements have been made, the changing accommodation continues to be inadequate, particularly for older and larger students. Lack of adequate indoor accommodation continues to restrict the balance of the curriculum. It is still the case that few girls participate in after-school activities and the concerns expressed by some students and their parents about lack of opportunities seem to be justified.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

171. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Above average GCSE results and rising trend continued in 2001
- Boys and girls perform very well in comparison with other subjects



- Teaching is very good
- Leadership is excellent
- Very good opportunities for all students to study their own and other faiths
- Lessons provide experiences of high quality

Areas for improvement

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172. A key feature of students' achievement across the age range is the development of literacy skills alongside the development of their subject knowledge and understanding. Standards in the work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Achievement is good for all students. Students use religious language in their oral and written work confidently. They develop good literacy skills by scanning texts for meaning; in their study of Islam they identify statements of belief and features of Allah from reading the Call to Prayer. They use their knowledge to give explanations. In their study of Sikhism they use their knowledge of worship in the Gurdwara to illustrate how the principle of equality is demonstrated. In a study of a Muslim birth ceremony, some gifted and talented students combined descriptive detail with symbolic meaning in their writing. Students with special needs show good skills when writing imaginary eyewitness accounts of the ceremony. All students, including those for whom English is an additional language, develop investigation skills through examining artefacts from Christianity and other faiths. They speculate on their use. Students show skills of reflection and response when identifying, illustrating and describing the different stages in their own journeys through life.
173. Standards in the work seen are above average by the end of Year 11 and achievement is very good. Students with special needs, gifted and talented students and those receiving language support make good progress. All students continue to use religious language well in their oral and written work. Full course students develop good skills in interpretation. They use texts to identify the symbolic meaning of bread and wine in Christian Holy Communion. They combine information from different sources to write accounts of a Sikh naming ceremony, with good use of technical terms. Higher attainers show very high standards in their coursework on Hindu worship; skills of description, explanation and argument are well developed. In work on Christian baptism, students use sources of information to explain the sequence of events in believers' baptism. Students with the highest level of special needs show very good recall of previous learning when describing the significance of baptism as a sign of commitment and the start of a new life.
174. Short course students have good skills of interpretation. They examine different images of Christ from around the world; they give their own reactions and speculate on their origins. Students with special needs showed a clear understanding of Islamic belief by distinguishing between a good and bad life for a Muslim, and gave personal reflections on how people from all faiths should lead their lives. Higher attainers write clear explanations of the Christian view of pain and suffering in the world. Students recall previous work on the Trinity and link it with current work on the Apostles' Creed. They write with structure and fluency about life and death issues.
175. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They work with silent concentration during writing activities. They show respect for each other's beliefs during discussion. They collaborate well in tasks requiring pair or group work.

176. Teaching is very good throughout the age range. There is a significant amount of very good teaching in all year groups. A key feature of the teaching is the high degree of consistency across the department and across all lessons. Specialist staff bring secure knowledge and this has a positive effect on students' learning. Students are constantly challenged. For example, very good use was made of students' own knowledge of different faith communities living in the local area and this knowledge was very effectively consolidated through question and answer. The teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that there is a constant emphasis on the use of correct terminology; students not only become familiar with the terminology associated with particular faiths, but also with terminology that is applicable to all faiths.
177. The use of learning resources is an excellent feature of the teaching. These are carefully designed to be accessible to all students, including those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language. They are very well used to introduce new ideas and concepts. Students are encouraged to scan texts for relevant information and to incorporate this into written work; the quality of resources enables students at all levels of attainment to develop skills in this process. The use of resources enables students to be thoroughly prepared for writing activities including homework, and this fosters the development of literacy skills. The quality of the resources enables students to work independently so that teachers are able to circulate and give individual support in lessons. Students make good use of ICT in assignments and coursework.
178. Lessons usually proceed at a challenging pace and with challenging content. For example, students spent half one lesson on Christianity considering statements in the Apostle's Creed and then looked at Christ's image from the perspective of different cultures, using high quality pictures. Students' achievement is well supported by the well-structured and well-planned lessons; students learn in a secure environment. Staff have a good awareness of examination requirements so that students in turn develop a good awareness of what is required in their own writing. Students have very good opportunities to study their own and other faiths. In a very small minority of lessons, teachers do not manage students well enough to ensure that they are fully attentive during the introduction to lessons or that any inattention is promptly dealt with.
179. Leadership is excellent, with a strong focus on students achieving well. There is a highly selective approach to choosing and developing resources so that students experience challenging ideas and concepts in a very accessible form. Library provision to support resources used in the classroom is very good. High quality resources help the development of literacy skills and, where appropriate, numeracy skills. The department has achieved a consistency in its teaching through very good teamwork; there is a common ethos and set of high expectations to which students positively respond.
180. Since the last inspection the improvement overall is good. The high standards referred to in the last report have been maintained and strengthened. Very good teaching has been maintained in Years 7 to 9; in Years 10 and 11, teaching has improved well.