

INSPECTION REPORT

WALKER TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Walker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Unique reference number: 108525

Headteacher: Dr A Broady

Reporting inspector: Mr C Sander
4151

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd February 2002

Inspection number: 190345

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 12 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Middle Street
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Newcastle-upon-Tyne
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Appropriate authority: Newcastle Local Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Councillor D Wood

Date of previous inspection: 11th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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4151	C Sander	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of college is it?</p> <p>The college's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the college led and managed?</p> <p>What should the college do to improve further?</p>
12682	J Griffin	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the college care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the college work in partnership with parents?</p>
23393	B Dower	Team inspector	English	
27416	T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1407	P Scott	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Sixth-form chemistry</p>	
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
16348	J Nichol	Team inspector	Art and design	
31779	V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3827	J Knight	Team inspector	Geography	
31329	K Barratt	Team inspector	History	
15396	R Bulman	Team inspector	<p>Modern foreign languages</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
31660	M Young	Team inspector	Music	
13217	M Butterworth	Team inspector	<p>Physical education</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
20719	A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education	
12825	N Carr	Team inspector	<p>Sixth-form business education</p> <p>Sixth-form psychology</p>	
18888	J Boulton	Team inspector	Sixth-form health and social care	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the college	
How good the college is	
What the college does well	
What could be improved	
How the college has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the college	
How well the college is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the college	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	15
The college's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	23
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	26
HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	30
HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	34
HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?	35
WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	40
PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS	43
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	48
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	72

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Walker Technology College is an 11 to 18 community comprehensive college for boys and girls, situated centrally in the east side of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. It is larger than average and became a specialist technology college in 2000. There are 1341 on roll, of whom 171 are in the sixth form. Nearly all the students are white. The number who speak English as an additional language is low. The college has increased in size since it was last inspected in 1996 and greatly so in the sixth form. Nearly all the students live close to the college, an area of extreme social deprivation. Standards on entry are well below average, including very low levels of literacy. More than half are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is a very high proportion and a feature shared by only four per cent of secondary schools nationally. Nearly a third of the students have identified special educational needs, above the national average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs, 2.2 per cent, is broadly average. The proportion continuing in full-time education beyond the age of 16 has tripled since the last inspection. The college is involved in the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative and is part of a developing, Small Education Action Zone (SEAZ).

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Results, standards and provision are improving at Walker Technology College. It is increasingly successful in meeting the needs and aspirations of its students. The majority, who attend regularly, achieve well at age 16 because they are well taught and expectations are high. Irregular attendance leads to unsatisfactory achievement by some students. Overall performance is close to the average for similar schools at age 16. Nearly all its students develop positive values. As a result, an increasing number continue their education beyond the age of 16. The very good sixth-form provision meets extremely well the very wide range of individual needs and aspirations. Beyond the age of 16, students achieve well because the teaching and guidance provided are very good. The college is very well led and managed. Its financial income is above average. It provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff result in an excellent degree of shared commitment to fulfilling the aims of the college.
- Very good subject knowledge, well-planned learning and very well managed behaviour in lessons result in students making good progress.
- It makes excellent provision for students with special educational needs.
- Standards in art and design are above those usually found at age 16.
- It provides a very good range of learning opportunities, including an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- It cares well for the personal and social needs of individual students.

What could be improved

- Some students' and their parents' attitudes towards the importance of regular attendance, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Writing and speaking skills in all subjects.
- Standards and progress in music at age 14.
- Target setting in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The implementation of assessment policies.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the college was last inspected in 1996. It has responded well to the need to raise achievement. Results have improved because most of the teaching now provides more challenge, and the very much improved curriculum meets students' needs very well, and particularly so in the sixth form. The proportion of very good teaching is much higher. Results overall at age 14 have improved at a rate ahead of the national trend and at a rate broadly in line with the national trend at age 16. There has been good improvement in the proportion of students obtaining 5+ A*-C grades but not in the proportion obtaining 5+ A*-G grades. Improvement has been generally satisfactory in the procedures to monitor progress but target setting for individual students in some subjects remains unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. The provision for religious education is much better but remains unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Standards in the sixth form are also very much better and the improvement in results has been satisfactory overall. There has been satisfactory improvement in attendance rates and the number of exclusions has reduced.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards on entry to the college are well below national expectations and well below those usually found on entry to the sixth form. Progress in lessons is good. As a result, standards rise gradually but are lower than those usually found nationally at ages 14 and 16. Standards of work seen during the inspection were higher than the test and examination results in 2001, especially in the sixth form where they were in line with expectations in most subjects, very high in art and above national expectations in vocational courses.

The majority, who attend regularly, achieve well but those who attend infrequently do not. Standards are below national expectations in mathematics and English at ages 14 and 16. Unsatisfactory writing and speaking skills slow down the progress of many less competent students. Many do not get enough opportunity to practise and apply numeracy skills in their different subjects. They make much better progress in their information and communication technology (ICT) skills because there is very good provision in several subjects. Progress and achievement at age 18 are good overall. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations and higher than the most recent A-level results. They are above expectations in vocational courses.

Results in the national tests at age 14 in 2001 were well above average for similar schools but well below average for all schools nationally. They were well above for similar schools in science and mathematics and above in English. Results in science were well above target and marked a significant improvement on the previous year.

Statutory teacher assessments at age 14 in 2001 were well below average. The overall trend of improvement in English, mathematics and science is above the national trend.

GCSE results at age 16 were close to the average for similar schools, slightly below the college's challenging target and well below the national average for all schools. There has been good improvement in the proportion of students obtaining 5+ A*-C grades, 25 per cent in 2001. The trend of improvement since the last inspection has been broadly in line with the national trend. The proportions obtaining 5+ and 1+ A*-G has remained well below average. The best results in 2001 were in art, German, business studies and office applications. Students did less well in English literature, geography and history than they did in their other subjects.

Results in the sixth form in 2001 were low but represented good achievement when compared with students' starting points. They were broadly average in vocational courses, with good performance in business education and art and design.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Satisfactory. The majority are proud of their college and value the many opportunities it offers them. A small minority do not.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The college is an orderly community because most students observe the agreed codes of conduct, are generally attentive in lessons and are self-disciplined when moving around the college. Exclusions seldom occur.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Nearly all get on well together, are helpful, respectful, friendly and courteous. As a result, relationships are very good. Many do not readily show initiative and a small minority are disaffected, especially in Years 10 and 11.
Attendance	Poor. The majority attend regularly but a small number do so rarely, in nearly all cases because poor attendance is an ingrained characteristic before they even start at the college. As a result, attendance is well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of learning and teaching is good. It gets better as students get older. It is very good in the sixth form. The college meets the needs of its students very well through the well-planned organisation of teaching groups, including increased setting from Year 7 and excellent provision for those with special educational needs. Teachers know a lot about the subjects they teach. They manage the behaviour of their students very well.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory but varies considerably between subjects. The teaching of key skills in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching in mathematics and science is good. It is satisfactory in English. Most students learn at a good pace and work well because their teachers use their very good subject knowledge to explain things carefully. Most respond well to the good level of expectations in lessons. As a result, they generally persevere well to overcome difficulties but few show a lot of initiative or confidence to make decisions, particularly at age 14. Many show a good level of interest and concentration in lessons because their behaviour is very well managed. Only the more competent students remember things well, many others tend to forget what they have learned previously. As a result, they make greater progress in individual lessons than they do over time. Some aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. Consequently, many students do not always know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Some marking of work is unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Very well planned to meet a very wide range of needs. There is an excellent range of additional activities and very good provision to support students in their studies. Careers education and guidance are very good. Statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not fully met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Excellent. Individual needs are very well identified. Students make very good gains in confidence because support is well matched to their needs.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The needs of a small number of students are well met. There are good opportunities for students to help each other.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is good provision for students' moral, cultural and social development. It is satisfactory for their spiritual growth. The house system is a strong feature of the provision for social and moral development.
How well the college cares for its students	Good. The level of personal care is high. The monitoring of behaviour is very good. The impact of the very thorough monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. Assessment procedures are inconsistent, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Support and guidance are very good in the sixth form. The partnership with parents is good.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership because he sets high expectations and challenging targets linked to well-defined priorities for improvement. As a result, all know where they are heading. His management is very good because he encourages very effective teamwork that concentrates on improving achievement. Key staff perform very well both as leaders and managers because delegation and accountability are well defined. Consequently, the shared commitment to improvement is high.

Aspect	Comment
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Their involvement in issues concerning behaviour and attendance is very good. They are well informed about the work of the college and have taken decisive action to improve sixth-form provision. They are insufficiently involved at an early enough stage in development planning. They do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and religious education in the sixth form.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are regular reviews of performance and progress. The development plan provides an increasingly effective guide for measuring success. The principles of best value are very well applied.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Income is allocated most carefully in line with priorities. The provision of learning resources is good, and very good in the sixth form. Staffing is satisfactorily matched to the needs of the college. Sixth-form accommodation is very good. Space is tight in some areas of the college as numbers continue to rise. The outdoor provision for games is unsatisfactory and facilities for dance are poor.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership and management of the college. • The progress made by their children. • The quality of teaching. • The interesting range of outside activities. • The provision for personal development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some aspects of reports and parents' evenings.

The inspection team found much to support the views of the small number of parents who completed the questionnaire or spoke at the very well attended meeting before the start of the inspection. There were no major concerns raised by those parents. The arrangements for reports are broadly satisfactory and the inspection team found that the college had already started to review and prepare for changes to the reporting system, including their number, format and the timing of their issue.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 171 students in the sixth form, broadly in line with the national average. There has been a three-fold increase in size in recent years. The number of male and female students is broadly similar. Most were previously in Year 11 at the college. The prior attainment of the students on entry to the sixth form is well below that usually found. Approximately one fifth are known to be eligible for free school meals, more than three times the national average. A small number have identified special educational needs, including four with statements. Entry requirements for courses at advanced, intermediate, foundation and entry levels are relatively modest. The proportion following A-level courses is below average but is now broadly average for AS-level courses. Numbers are well above average for advanced, intermediate and foundation vocational courses. Because the majority of students complete courses at foundation and entry level, the proportion of students entering higher education is below the national average. Nevertheless, the large majority of students continue in full-time education after the age of 18. The overall trend is rising.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

At the time of the last inspection, provision was good but standards needed to improve, features shared by approximately one third of sixth forms nationally. There have been very good improvements since then because very good leadership and good management have transformed the provision and started to drive up standards. Achievement is good because expectations are high, and support and guidance are very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good because lessons are very well planned. The teaching of key skills is unsatisfactory overall. The very good curriculum matches very closely the students' needs and aspirations although a few find the level of challenge daunting. As a result, nearly all successfully complete their courses and achieve well. The sixth form now provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Very good leadership and good management, resulting in steadily improving results and standards and rapid improvements in the quality and range of provision.
- Provision reflects the aims and values of the college extremely well.
- Excellent provision for students with special educational needs.
- High expectations in the very good teaching, resulting in very good attitudes to learning at all levels.
- Very good support and guidance, resulting in good progress.
- Very good curricular provision that meets individual needs very well indeed.

What could be improved

- Some students' attitude towards attendance.
- Individual target setting in each subject studied.
- Provision and standards in key skills, particularly those involving aspects of personal development such as leadership, decision making and teamwork.
- Spiritual development, including the provision for religious education.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
MATHEMATICS	Provision is good . Good teaching leads to good achievement because subject knowledge is very good and expectations are high. Provision to develop the key skills of numeracy is good.
CHEMISTRY	Provision is very good . Very good teaching develops good learning attitudes, resulting in good progress. Opportunities to develop some aspects of key skills, particularly those relating to social development, are currently unsatisfactory.
PSYCHOLOGY	Provision is good . Strong emphasis on scientific issues in the good teaching. Standards are now much higher than the below average AS results in 2001. Good achievement results from high expectations.
BUSINESS STUDIES	Provision is good . Standards are rising because teaching presents a good level of challenge. They are above average for vocational courses and average for A-level courses.
COMPUTER STUDIES	Provision is satisfactory . Satisfactory teaching enables students to make satisfactory progress but standards are below average because most have not studied the subject before the age of 16.
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	Provision is very good . Excellent subject knowledge in the very good teaching results in a good range of activities so that all succeed well. Assessment procedures are very good.
ART AND DESIGN	Provision is very good . Standards are above average and achievement is good because students are highly motivated by the good teaching.
GEOGRAPHY	Provision is very good . Standards of course work are high because research skills are very well taught.
HISTORY	Provision is good . Lessons are well planned and subject knowledge is good. Consequently, standards are rising rapidly. Some aspects of the teaching of key skills are unsatisfactory.
ENGLISH	Provision is satisfactory . Achievement is good because teachers provide very good subject knowledge and very good support and guidance to individual students.

Fifty-six lessons were observed in the sixth form. The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good. There were three examples of outstanding teaching, in science and art and design. No teaching seen was less than satisfactory. High expectations, very good planning and very good relationships characterised a high proportion of the teaching. In some subjects, the key skills of communication and ICT are well taught but, overall, the provision is unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Provision is very good. The students agree that they get very good advice when choosing their courses at the start of the sixth form. Induction arrangements are very good. All students get a good deal at the college.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good leadership and good management. Excellent commitment to the aims and values of the college results in provision that meets the needs of all students extremely well, including those with special educational needs. The strategic use of resources is excellent, resulting in an excellent match with agreed priorities in financial planning. Very good monitoring of teaching and very high expectations contribute very well to improving standards. These arrangements are well managed.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wide choice of courses that are well matched to their interests. • The preparation and support provided to help them settle into their new courses. • The very good teaching. • The enjoyment of being in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their progress. • The impartiality of advice about careers and future courses. • The range of activities outside of lessons.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of students. There are plans to increase the frequency of reports and reviews but students do not have individual short-term targets. The college provides an excellent range of activities outside of lessons. There is good advice about a wide range of careers and continuing education.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and students' achievements

- *All young people are referred to in this report as students because that is the practice of the college.*
- *The word 'competent' refers to students whose work is broadly in line with the standards expected nationally. This group comprises approximately a third of the students at the college.*
- *The phrase 'more competent' refers to those whose work is higher than the standards expected nationally. This group comprises approximately one twentieth of the students.*
- *The phrase 'less competent' refers to those whose work does not yet reach the standards expected nationally. This group comprises nearly two-thirds of the students at the college.*
- *The word 'results' refers to how well the pupils and students are doing in national tests, GCSE, GNVQ and A-level examinations. Occasionally, the word 'performance' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'standards' is used to define how well students are doing when their work is compared with what students nationally are expected to know, understand and do at ages 11,14, 16 and 18. Occasionally the term 'work' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of the standards found, or expected to be found, nationally.*
- *The word 'level' refers to a particular standard of work described in the National Curriculum. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'grade' refers to the public examination grading systems for GCSE and GCE. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of averages.*
- *The word 'achievement' defines how much progress students are making and whether they are working hard enough. It usually refers to how well they are doing at age 14 compared with what they were able to do at age 11, at age 16 compared with what they could do at age 14 and finally what they can do at age 18 compared with what they were able to do at age 16. Evaluations are expressed in terms such as 'good', 'satisfactory', 'unsatisfactory'.*
- *Not all students study all subjects after age 14. Broadly speaking, the older the students, the smaller the number studying a particular subject.*

Results and standards on entry to the college at age 11

- Standards on entry to the college are low.
- There has been only a slight rise in standards on entry over the last five years.
- The reading ages of students on entry have got worse over the last three years.

1. Standards on entry to the college are low in English and mathematics and very low in science. They are below average for similar primary schools. The girls are generally doing better than the boys. In most year groups, only one third approximately have reached the standards expected nationally for young people at the age of 11. More recently this has risen slightly but remains below one half of the year group. Nearly three-quarters now reach this standard in other primary schools nationally. Consequently, students at the college are well behind when they start.

2. Standardised tests, taken shortly after entry to the college, confirm this picture. Only approximately one third of the students reach the mean score.
3. Reading competence on entry to the college is very low. It has got worse. Approximately one third of the students have a reading age on entry that is three years behind what it should be when they start.
4. The small number of parents who returned the questionnaire or who expressed a view at the very well attended meeting for parents prior to the inspection are very well pleased with the progress made by their children.
5. The very high proportion of students known to be eligible for free schools meals is shared by only four per cent of all schools. A high proportion face very serious social disadvantages. Consequently, the similar schools comparisons are particularly important when evaluating the effectiveness of the college and the achievements of its students, teachers and support staff.

Results, standards and achievement at age 14

Strengths

- Results in 2001 were above average for similar schools and above target in science.
- Good progress, particularly in reading, because the quality of additional support is very high.
- An improving trend in national test results, ahead of the national trend.
- Above average standards in physical education.
- Good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in science and geography, because the quality of learning is better.
- Good improvement since the last inspection in levels of achievement because expectations are higher and learning is well planned.

Areas for improvement

- Students' and parents' attitudes about the importance of regular attendance.
- Achievement and progress in music.
- Some aspects of provision for art and design between the ages of 11 and 14.
- Students' skills in speaking, listening and writing at length.
- Opportunities to develop and apply numeracy skills in different subjects.

6. Results at age 14 are above average when compared with similar schools and represent a good level of achievement.
7. Results in national tests in 2001 were well above average for similar schools. They were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. These results were the best to date, with particularly good improvements in science. They remain well below the average for all schools nationally.
8. Approximately two-fifths obtain the national standard, Level 5 or better. Two-thirds of students do so nationally. Results in science were well ahead of the governors' target. They were slightly behind the challenging targets in English and mathematics.
9. Results in English were slightly behind those in mathematics and science at the college because most students have more catching up to do than in the other two subjects. However, students are less behind their age group nationally in English than in the other

two subjects at age 14, an indication that the literacy strategy and additional lesson time is having an impact on standards and that achievement is good.

10. The girls did better than the boys in English. Both did similarly in the other two tests.
11. Statutory assessments in the students' other subjects indicate that standards are currently well below those expected nationally but rising. There are no comparisons available with similar schools nationally. Assessments were well above average in physical education. Otherwise, they were well below average.
12. Achievement at age 14 is good. It is better in English and mathematics than in science. Many students catch up at a good rate, particularly in subjects that depend more on practical than on literacy skills. Consequently, at age 14 they are, on average, just over four terms behind other students nationally. At age 11, they were at least six terms behind and in some cases, 12 terms behind.
13. Despite these improvements, standards overall are below those expected nationally. They were in line with expectations in nearly half of the 89 lessons seen. Standards were higher than the most recent test results because the trend of improvement is continuing. The small minority of more competent students reach standards above those expected nationally. The gifted and talented make satisfactory progress and achieve particularly well in mathematics.
14. It is not possible to evaluate with any degree of certainty the impact that the absence of approximately 15 per cent of the students during the inspection had on the overall profile of standards seen. Indications are that it resulted in a slightly more favourable picture.
15. The emphasis upon whole-class teaching with strong direction by the teacher frequently restricts the range of opportunities to improve oral skills. This impacts on the rate of progress in understanding. Many students make good progress in geography because the very good teaching of basic skills overcomes many of these difficulties.
16. Standards are improving overall at age 14. They are highest in physical education because there is a strong and shared commitment to improving skills across a range of individual and team games. They are lowest in music at age 14 because weaknesses in teaching and assessment result in unsatisfactory progress. Standards of writing and speaking are below expectations overall. Unsatisfactory analytical skills are evident in the creation and interpretation of graphs in mathematics and science.

Results, standards and achievement at age 16

Strengths

- The proportion obtaining 5+ A*-C was above average for similar schools in 2001.
- Results in art and design were well above the national average.
- Good improvement overall since the last inspection.
- The examination achievements of students with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Consistent performance in all subjects by the boys and the girls.
- The proportion obtaining 1+ and 5+ A*-G grades.
- Students' thinking and memory skills.

17. Results at age 16 in 2001 were broadly in line with similar schools. The proportion obtaining 5+ A*-C, 25 per cent, was above average for similar schools. The proportion obtaining 5+ and 1+ A*-G grades was below.
18. The trend of improvement is broadly in line with that nationally in English, mathematics and science. Performance in 2001 was broadly in line with similar schools but well below the average for all schools nationally.
19. The best results were in art and design; well above the national average for all schools.
20. Overall, the performance of the boys and the girls was broadly similar but there was considerable variation between subjects.
21. The more competent students achieve well. The less competent also achieve well if they attend regularly. Students with special educational needs do particularly well, with impressive achievements in a smaller number of subjects at GCSE. Approximately two-thirds of these students gained at least one grade A*-G.
22. Results were below the challenging target set by the governors by approximately five per cent. They remained similar to the previous year whereas locally there is an expectation of a three per cent year-on-year improvement.
23. Performance was well below the average for all schools nationally. Twenty-five per cent obtained 5+ A*-C; well below the national average but sustaining good improvement since the last inspection. A similar proportion did not obtain 5+ A*-G grades, indicating that some less competent students continue to underachieve. Achievement overall at age 16 is satisfactory.
24. All students get every encouragement to do well and every opportunity to complete their chosen courses successfully. Despite this, a minority continue to attend irregularly and to disregard the help and support offered by the college. This is why the proportion obtaining 5+ grades A*-G is well below the national average.
25. The impressive range of additional study support is making a big difference to many students' performance, particularly the boys. Only those who choose, often wilfully, to absent themselves, stand outside an impressive circle of very well supported achievement.
26. Several factors contribute to performance at age 16 that is well below average for all schools:
 - The least competent students, many with special educational needs, follow an alternative curriculum. This enables them to achieve very well in a smaller number of examination subjects and gain accreditation for their work and achievements in other ways.
 - The level of irregular attendance, sometimes resulting in the failure to complete the required coursework.
 - The short memory spans, lack of confidence and skills in applying knowledge to demonstrate understanding when faced with examination questions.

27. For many students, attitudes towards regular attendance are critical. Half of those who attended regularly last year obtained 5+ A*-C and all but one obtained at least one grade G.
28. Standards are rising at age 16. They remain below those expected nationally but, overall, they are higher than the 2001 examination results, pointing to a continuing improvement in performance. In some subjects, the minority of more competent students produce work of a high standard. This is the case in mathematics because good levels of understanding result in the confident application of knowledge, and in geography the more competent demonstrate very good long-term memory when recalling much earlier learning.
29. Standards in art and design are higher than usually found nationally because teaching is both thorough and imaginative, promoting rigorous study as well as creative expression. On the other hand, they are lower than is usually the case nationally in design and technology because the research work of less competent students is often superficial. Sadly, no students choose to study music beyond the age of 14.
30. Work in physical education is better than is usually the case nationally because good progress is maintained in the further acquisition of more sophisticated skills in individual and team sports.
31. Standards are broadly in line with expectations in modern foreign languages where achievement is good because the more competent are well motivated and the less competent gain much from activities that are well matched to their needs. They are similarly so in ICT because many students apply confidently a wide range of computer skills and the more competent produce a lot of work, showing very good attitudes in re-drafting their work in order to improve it further.
32. Standards in all other subjects that students choose to study after the age of 14 are below those young people are expected to reach at age 16.
33. Overall, achievement is good when comparisons are made with students' starting points at age 14. The very good additional opportunities, including study sessions, extra lessons and the skilful mentoring of individuals, enrich the good teaching. Consequently, any individual who wants to succeed has ample opportunity to do so.
34. Many continue to make good progress in their reading skills and this enables them to cope increasingly well with the study of their text books and other written material. The rate of overall progress slows a bit in English after age 14 as written tasks become more complex, challenging and varied. Consequently, achievement is satisfactory overall, as it is in science. Changes to the curriculum and much more emphasis on improving literacy skills in science have started to accelerate the progress in Year 10.
35. Nearly a third of the students have identified special educational needs, above the national average. They make very good progress at age 14 with nearly two-thirds no longer requiring additional school action or action plus. Their very good progress continues at age 16 when two-thirds of those who had continued to receive additional support gained some passes at GCSE, five obtaining a grade in the range A*-C and the large majority at least two grades in the range A*-G. Nearly half obtained 5+ A*-G grades and two students gained 11 passes. Several who received additional support from mentors performed well above target. Many gain other forms of accreditation after following alternative courses that are very well matched to their needs. Most develop good ICT skills and use the technology confidently.

36. At age 16, students with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects and in reading, although gains in speaking and writing are often much smaller. They make very good progress in art and design and in the practical aspects of physical education.
37. Some make good use of ICT and increasingly so after the age of 14. This helps them to improve both the content and the presentation of their work. For example, they make good use of computer-aided design and manufacturing processes in design and technology. Students are able to use CAD/Cam in all years. Many make good use of their wordprocessing skills and graphic packages. For example, AS students in the sixth form make good use of computers to analyse their fieldwork data on pedestrian and traffic movements. However, despite the well above average provision of computers, the opportunities to fulfil the statutory requirements for ICT in all subjects of the revised National Curriculum are unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

Results, standards and achievements

Strengths

- Standards improving at a good rate.
- High standards in art and design.
- Better standards in geography, science and psychology than are usually found nationally.

Areas for improvement

- Some aspects of key skills.

38. Standards on entry to the sixth form are much lower than is usually the case nationally. A minority study advanced courses, many of whom have very modest GCSE grades. Consequently, overall results at age 18 are well below the national average.
39. Numbers are relatively small in individual subjects. Comparisons with national averages should, therefore, be viewed with considerable caution. There are no comparisons available for sixth forms of a similar type nationally.
40. Results in 2001 were well below average. The average points scores for A- and AS-levels were well below the national average. Results in vocational courses were much better and close to the national average. The best results were in GNVQ business and in art and design.
41. A-level results were very low in biology, business studies and English literature. Just over three-quarters of candidates gained an A-level grade in each of their chosen subjects.
42. Standards observed in lessons were much higher than the 2001 results, reflecting an accelerating rate of improvement as students become more confident and resources are more readily available for AS courses. They were high in art and design, better than those usually found nationally in geography, science and psychology and broadly in line with expected standards in English, design and technology, history, mathematics, business studies and physical education.

43. Achievement is good in nearly all subjects, remaining satisfactory in science, English and design and technology.
44. Standards in key skills are broadly in line with those usually found nationally after the age of 16. Improvement has not been so marked because co-ordination of provision is acknowledged by the college to be unsatisfactory and subject to current review. Standards are higher in advanced vocational courses because the courses require them to be taught in real contexts. Standards are highest in ICT, broadly average in numeracy but below in communications. Where teaching groups are very small, standards in those aspects of key skills that cover personal and social development are unsatisfactory because opportunities to exercise leadership, decision-making and teamwork skills are much reduced.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Very good relationships between adults and students and among students.
- Students' good behaviour and personal development.
- Very good attitudes of those who attend regularly.

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes of some students, particularly in lower sets in Years 10 and 11.
- Attitudes of a minority towards regular attendance.

45. The small number of parents who spoke at the well-attended meeting before the inspection or who completed a questionnaire consider that the attitudes and behaviour of their children are good. These views are amply supported in the findings of this inspection.
46. Most students are well behaved, like their college and form very good relationships. Consequently, their personal development is good. The good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes an important contribution to their positive attitudes and values. For these reasons, the good standards, identified in the previous inspection, have been well maintained.
47. Students' attitudes to college are satisfactory overall. Based on questionnaire returns, most like school. The large majority are proud of their college. For example, a group of Year 8 students like the title 'Technology College' as it accurately conveys the sense that they are treated 'like students who regularly use computers'. They are positive about the help they get from their teachers and regard only family as more important than college in their lives. A small minority choose to turn their backs on what it offers.
48. Students' favourite subjects and lessons are those where they are practically involved, such as physical education, art and design, experimental work in science and the use of computers. The best attitudes and behaviour occur in lessons where expectations are high, work is demanding and students are busy and engaged in a variety of activities. Attitudes of students with special needs are very good overall because the high quality of additional support gives them confidence and provides work that is well matched to their needs and circumstances.
49. In many lower sets in Years 10 and 11, a significant minority of students show a distinct lack of enthusiasm for subjects requiring literacy skills and abstract thinking, such as English, mathematics and science. Also, during the week of the inspection, attendance of students in these lower sets was significantly lower than in higher sets, especially in

Years 10 and 11. Behaviour in classrooms, during lunchtime and breaktimes, is good overall. Throughout the day, most students are well behaved. In most lessons, behaviour is good and sometimes very good. Very little unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in lessons.

50. Nearly all students move around college in a calm manner. No evidence of bullying or racism was seen. Exclusions are few. The rate in recent years is broadly in line with schools of similar size nationally. There is no sign of graffiti or evidence of vandalism or damage to property, such as doors or toilet fittings.
51. Students' personal development is good overall. Most enjoy speaking with visitors. Most students show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, when questioned in groups, they show respect for different views expressed by others. Whilst there is a college council, little evidence was seen of students exercising routine responsibilities in lessons or around college. Although there are some good examples of students showing initiative or making choices in their learning, overall this feature is less pronounced than usual.
52. Relationships between adults and students and among students are very good overall. Adults act as very good role models. Teachers value students' work and most effectively praise effort and good work. For example, Year 8 students spoke very positively about the support they get from teachers and the fair way in which they are treated. As a result, students are comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers. This assists their learning and helps them to feel very much part of the life of the college. Very good relationships among students of all levels of competence, including those with special educational needs, and with their teachers and support staff are very good features. As a result, when teaching methods provide the opportunity, nearly all students work well in pairs and small groups, supporting each other's learning with explanations.
53. Attendance is poor. At typically 85 per cent, it is well below the national average, despite considerable efforts to improve it by teachers, mentors and other support staff. It has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. During the inspection, absence was several percentage points higher than the annual level. It was broadly similar in Years 7 to 10 but dipped sharply to two-thirds of those on roll in Year 11.
54. The overall attendance level is similar for boys and girls. A small proportion of students, with ingrained reluctance to attend college regularly, accounts for a large proportion of the overall absence.
55. This chronic absence, most prevalent in lower sets in Years 10 and 11, has a significant impact on the learning of both the regular attenders and the absentees. Teachers regularly have to adapt their lessons to engage students who missed the previous lesson and this slows the progress of others.
56. Much of the authorised absence is condoned by parents. The college correctly seeks legal prosecution in the most persistent cases. The authorised absence level is broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is satisfactory overall. Most students arrive on time. Nearly all students get to their lessons on time during the college day and there is no significant truancy during that time.

Sixth form

57. Students' attitudes are good. They are appreciative of the rapidly improving provision. This results in very positive attitudes in most lessons. Attendance at approximately 90 per cent is unsatisfactory, being lower than is usually the case in sixth forms nationally.
58. Students' personal development and relationships are good overall. Most use their time productively. They are strikingly adept and comfortable using computers, in particular. Those interviewed during the inspection were mature and measured in their judgements. They had much to say that was complimentary and some valid suggestions about where things could be improved.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- The commendable proportion of excellent teaching.
- Very good subject knowledge results in good planning, giving students confidence in their learning.
- The very good teaching of students with special educational needs improves their reading and gives them confidence to succeed.
- The very good management of students' behaviour.
- The good pace of learning in many lessons requires and supports good concentration.
- The very good learning of the small minority of students who speak English as an additional language.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of very good teaching.
- The variety and range of teaching methods to further stimulate students' active participation and initiative.
- The teaching of numeracy skills in different subjects.
- More opportunities for discussion to consolidate and extend understanding.
- Using assessment in lessons to let students know how well they are doing.

59. The quality of both teaching and learning is good. It was good or better in well over half of the 213 lessons seen. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in three lessons and poor on one occasion. No teaching was unsatisfactory after the age of 14.
60. Overall, both teaching and learning got better as the students got older. It was satisfactory in lessons for students up to the age of 14, good in lessons for students between the ages of 14 and 16 and very good in the sixth form. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection.
61. A striking feature of the good provision is the proportion of excellent teaching, 13 examples of which were spread across several subjects and all years except Year 10. The proportion of excellent teaching and learning was broadly similar before and after the age of 14 and close to that usually found when the overall quality of teaching is very good.
62. In the lessons seen, approximately one fifth of the teaching was very good, a big improvement since the last inspection. When the overall quality is very good, that proportion is usually comfortably more than one third.

63. The challenging priority facing the college as it seeks to improve still further is to increase the proportion of very good teaching and learning.
64. There has been good improvement in the proportion of very good teaching since the last inspection. In such teaching, expectations are invariably high. The students are regularly challenged to think for themselves, to study in greater depth and make links between aspects of their learning, for example in mathematics. Consequently, they start to become reflective learners. They also make very good progress because the pace is brisk, the challenge high, the enthusiasm infectious and a good range of different activities sustains interest and provides enjoyment. These were features of the very good teaching in geography and modern foreign languages.
65. The inspection contract did not provide for a report on business studies. There are many very strong features in the very good provision for this subject.
66. During this inspection, there were some indications in many subjects that safe rather than exciting methods were chosen. This was one reason why teaching was satisfactory rather than good in English. By way of contrast, a much greater variety of methods in art and design lessons for students after the age of 14 resulted in more exciting learning.
67. Students were taught as a whole class in more than two-thirds of the lessons for students up to the age of 16. Consequently, there were relatively fewer opportunities for students to show initiative, make decisions, discuss their work with each other or develop the skills of leadership and teamwork. These are often the features of very good and excellent learning.
68. Much of the teaching and learning is good because the teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding enables them to explain things clearly in lessons and to plan very well the development of students' knowledge over time.
69. Where teaching is very good, the learning objectives are well defined at the start of the lesson. In the best teaching, they are used to check the gains made at the end of the lesson. In the best teaching, for example in art and design after age 14, the subject matter is presented as a springboard from which the students progress to explore their own interpretations. In modern foreign languages, very good teaching stems from very good planning that builds carefully on previous learning.
70. The use of questions to check that knowledge has been grasped is generally good. In the good lessons, questions promote greater understanding, but only rarely do they result in the students posing questions of the teacher or asking 'what if....?'
71. The management of students' learning is a very good feature in many subjects. A good proportion of students can present challenging behaviour. It is one of the strengths of the teaching that students know where they stand without being ordered where to stand. Expectations are both high and unambiguous. Mutual respect and very good relationships result. Consequently, lessons are nearly always conducted without significant interruption because most students work hard, concentrate well and the level of inclusion is high.
72. Behaviour and learning attitudes were very good or better in just over a third of lessons seen. In only one lesson seen during the inspection were they unsatisfactory.

73. The provision for students of different levels of competence is equitable. For the larger than usual number of students with special educational needs, it is very good overall and occasionally excellent. In the best teaching, planning is exemplary and based on a precise identification and thorough understanding of students' needs. Behaviour management is frequently outstanding. Consequently, many make the best possible progress.
74. The small number of students who speak English as an additional language learn very well because their particular needs are managed very effectively by placing them in the sets of more competent students. Consequently, they make very good gains in spoken language.
75. The inclusive nature of the good teaching is further enhanced by the generally good match of work to the needs and circumstances of both the more and the less competent students. Where they are taught together, for example in geography, good gains result when students learn from each other. Further refinement of printed resources is required to ensure that they match fully the needs of the least and the most competent. Better match of tasks to different levels of competence is required to improve further the satisfactory teaching of design and technology.
76. On other occasions, the setting of students according to levels of competence supports good, whole-class teaching, for example in modern foreign languages and in science where the recent introduction of a GNVQ course provides a very good match of subject content to students' needs and interests.
77. There are some weak features in some teaching and learning that are otherwise satisfactory overall.
78. Provision for the teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall but inconsistent. Consequently, students' progress is sometimes slowed because they lack the language to express and explore ideas. Reading and writing are well taught in history but learning is restricted for many because there are fewer than usual opportunities to write and speak at length. Provision in geography is much better. Consequently, standards are higher. The quality of learning in science has improved as a result of more emphasis on teaching technical vocabulary but planned opportunities for students to speak for a range of purposes is unsatisfactory. In design and technology, making skills are well taught but design skills are not.
79. The teaching of numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. Students have less time for mathematics than is usually found nationally. There are some good opportunities in history but, overall, there is no consequent compensation for this in the planned provision of other subjects. Key objectives for numeracy do not figure in the schemes of work for other subjects
80. ICT is used well in mathematics, science and design and technology to improve the quality and range of learning. However, in other subjects, opportunities are more rare, despite the very high number of computers, to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum.
81. The use of ongoing assessment is also inconsistent. As a result, students are not always clear about how well they are doing in terms of the nationally expected standards or what they need to do to improve. This is an area for improvement in history. Some aspects of marking are unsatisfactory in science and assessment procedures for students between the ages of 11 and 14 are weak in art and design and

in design and technology because the standards described in the National Curriculum are not used for assessment and target setting.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very good teaching in art and design, geography, history and science.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and high expectations help students to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of key skills.

82. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It was consistently so in both Year 12 and Year 13. The best teaching in the 56 lessons seen was in art and design, geography, history and science, in each of which at least one example of excellent teaching was seen. It was consistently very good in psychology.
83. The strongest features are teachers' very good subject knowledge that enables them to interpret syllabi very well. As a result, students are well prepared for examinations. High expectations result in a good degree of challenge and pace which is well balanced with guidance, support and helpful marking of work. This gives confidence to many students with modest levels of competence. Consequently, nearly all students much enjoy their learning.
84. Sometimes, for example in mathematics, teaching methods are narrow and learning is directed by the teacher. As a result, whilst this provides good support to the less competent, it restricts opportunities for the more competent to analyse problems for themselves. By way of contrast, in the very good teaching of chemistry there are ample opportunities to undertake research in depth on an individual basis.
85. The teaching of key skills is unsatisfactory. Provision is currently subject to review.
86. Numeracy, communications and ICT skills are taught most effectively in the vocational courses. Consequently, less competent students achieve well at entry and foundation levels and students on the health and social care course demonstrate good note-taking skills and increasing confidence in discussion. ICT skills are well applied in mathematics, psychology and health and social care. Research skills are well taught in art and design. As a result, standards are high because work is studied in depth.
87. In some A-level courses, many students do not apply these skills well. For example, in chemistry, standards of note-taking are unsatisfactory. Where teaching groups are small, there are few opportunities to develop the key skills of leadership, teamwork and shared decision-making that are important aspects of the key skills of personal development.

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

Strengths

- Challenging and flexible provision after the age of 14, very well matched to needs.
- Excellent additional learning opportunities.
- Very good careers and guidance education that raises aspirations and promotes positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Continuity beyond the age of 16.
- Provision to develop numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Provision for music after the age of 14.

88. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good overall. They are excellent in the sixth form. Provision is based on strongly held principles: the inclusion of all students; the best interests of individuals and well-considered responses to local and national circumstances. Consequently, the breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are very good, providing equitably for male and female students of different ages and competencies.
89. Most issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed as part of a strategy to improve standards and raise students' aspirations.
90. The taught week of 25 hours is in line with national recommendations and longer than at the time of the last inspection. The college day extends considerably beyond this for the many students who participate in an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including additional support for their studies. Generous allocations of registration and form time contribute well to students' personal development, providing good opportunities for advice, guidance and the communication of information.
91. The curriculum includes all National Curriculum subjects and largely meets statutory requirements, with suitable adjustments of time to match college priorities and individuals' needs, such as additional time for English.
92. There is less time for mathematics as a result. The management and planning of the consequent need to teach numeracy skills regularly in other subjects are unsatisfactory.
93. Resources for ICT are very good and provision is generally much better than in most schools nationally. The planned provision within mathematics, science and design and technology is very good, reflecting the priorities of the technology college plan. There are considerably fewer opportunities to use computers in several other subjects.
94. The college provides all students between the ages of 11 and 14 with a satisfactory foundation of skills and knowledge on which to base more specialised studies thereafter. One lesson of ICT per week and a well-taught programme of personal, social and health education are provided for each student. The time provided for art and design is above average, whereas for design and technology it is below. All students study French and more able linguists study German in addition in Years 8 and 9.
95. Provision is increasingly more flexible after age 14. Very good improvements since the last inspection have provided more challenge and a better match to individual need. The number of examination courses studied by most students has risen to nine, although many study more. A minority study a smaller number and get extra help to succeed. The degree of choice is very good, including an alternative curriculum that retains and encourages students with special educational needs and also a small minority of disaffected students. Consequently, all students who attend regularly are very well included in the curricular provision.
96. Provision for vocational education between the ages of 14 and 16 is satisfactory. The number and range of vocational courses has increased. These include an ICT-based GNVQ course counting for the equivalent of four GCSEs, and GNVQ science. Most students study double award science and have benefited from an increasingly flexible range of courses. Only a small number of students choose to study French or German

for the GCSE and no student chooses currently to study GCSE music. The college is currently reviewing these aspects of provision.

97. The college provides very good opportunities for additional studies, including homework clubs, Saturday revision classes and self-managed study for a minority of students in Years 10 and 11. Very good learning opportunities for less competent students extend beyond the college, drawing on stimulating and challenging local schemes such as Relaunch and the Walker Consortium. Those who speak English as an additional language are well included through extra support matched to their specific needs.
98. The emphasis on preparation for adulthood, continuing education and the world of work is good. As a result, the personal aspirations of many students are rising. They no longer see unemployment as inevitable and increasingly consider continuing into higher education after the age of 18.
99. The foundations of very good careers education and guidance are laid from the age of 11. This is continued through individual counselling and developed through a pre-vocational programme that includes an employability course in Year 10 and work experience for all students. Links with training organisations, local universities and colleges of further and higher education are very well established and widely beneficial.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Strengths

- Very good compensatory provision for social and cultural disadvantage.
- The quality of the personal, social and health and enrichment programmes.
- The various residential opportunities available to students.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for further spiritual development.

100. Overall, the provision for personal development is good. A high proportion of the small number of parents responding to the questionnaire agree that the college helps their children to become mature and responsible.
101. The extra-curricular life of the college is extremely rich and varied, providing excellent compensation for the very high level of cultural and social deprivation found locally. This very good provision has been recognised locally and nationally.
102. Before, during and after the school day, as well as at weekends and in holiday time, teaching staff, parents and associates of the school create a wealth of experiences beneficial to the social, recreational and cultural lives of the students. The arts, including drama and music, and sport feature prominently, as do travel at home and abroad and exchanges in Europe and the United States.
103. Many subjects such as geography, history and science make excellent use of external resources including the college's own residential centre in Cumbria. A high number of students achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Visitors to the school are numerous and always welcome, bringing valuable experience from a wide range of social, commercial and educational backgrounds. The college has equally strong links with the local Christian faith community and with the neighbourhood police.

104. Provision for spiritual education is satisfactory. All students in Years 10 and 11 take religious education where there is opportunity to reflect on the existence of God and the purpose of life. There are good opportunities for imaginative responses in art and design and poetry. Horizons are widened through exchange visits to America and Australia as well as Europe. However, there is still no daily act of collective worship for all students as required by legislation.
105. Moral development is well provided for. The ethos of the college ensures that an unambiguous moral code is consistently applied. Students take responsibility for their behaviour and show respect for each other, property and the environment. The personal, social and health education programme addresses contemporary issues very well. In science and geography students discuss ethical and environmental issues, and the complexities of solutions become apparent.
106. Social development is well nurtured through the house system. Students mix well, despite the restricted social areas. The residential opportunities at Hutton Roof enable students to experience living away from home. The student council provides good opportunities for a small number to serve, lead, work as a team and experience the democratic decision-making first-hand. Consequently, membership of the council provides well for the development of the skills of citizenship.
107. Teaching methods do not always promote social development so strongly because the opportunities for collaborative work are more limited.
108. The opportunities for cultural development are good. Students can participate in musical and dramatic activities and the recent production addressed issues surrounding racism. In history, students learn about their own cultural heritage. The study of major world religions teaches how beliefs influence lifestyles.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Excellent quality and range in the provision overall.
- Well-matched provision for students with special educational needs and low levels of competence.
- A good level of challenge for the more competent students.
- Cost effective provision.
- Provision raises aspirations, promoting improving rates of continuing education at ages 16 and 18.

Areas for improvement

- Continuity with the curriculum before the age of 16.
- Provision for key skills.

109. The college provides an excellent curriculum that is highly inclusive, offering very good learning opportunities in entry, foundation and advanced level courses. Provision for students with special educational needs and relatively low levels of competence are very good. It is a distinctive feature of the provision. A satisfactory range of advanced courses, including vocational subjects, presents a good level of challenge to the more competent minority.
110. Entry requirements for students embarking on A-level and vocational courses are modest. Occasionally, for example in science, the course can prove too demanding but,

overall, guidance is good and based on the principles of equality of access and response to individual students' needs, whether these be outstanding gifts and talents or moderate learning difficulties.

111. As a result of these very good improvements in provision, the number staying on has tripled in recent years, standards are rising, results are improving and the proportion seeking higher education is increasing.
112. Provision for key skills is satisfactory. It is well planned within vocational courses but unsatisfactory in several A-level subjects.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

113. The overall quality of provision for personal development is good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with increased opportunities to support younger students in such activities as paired reading.
114. There is good provision for moral development through the weekly assembly and the tutorial period. The enrichment programme contributes well to developing students' understanding of issues such as citizenship, the misuse of drugs and the dangers of smoking.
115. The provision for social development is good. The newly enhanced social accommodation enables students to mix easily. There are opportunities to participate in voluntary and community activities. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities includes sport, music, drama, and cultural exchanges. Consequently, there is good provision for cultural development.
116. The provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements to provide for religious education and a daily act of collective worship are not fully met.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Strengths

- The good levels of pastoral care.
- The promotion of students' positive behaviour and personal development.
- The support and guidance in the sixth form.

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

117. As at the previous inspection, the care arrangements for students are good. Assessment arrangements have improved and are now broadly satisfactory overall.
118. Procedures to promote and ensure students' wellbeing are good. The long established house system is well organised and provides a strong spirit of 'family'.
119. Arrangements for induction to Year 7 are very good. Year 11 students confirm that they feel well supported and guided as they face up to decisions about their life after school. Students confirm that they are well cared for if they are ill or otherwise distressed.
120. Support is very good for the significant number of students experiencing difficulties as they grow up. For example, as part of Excellence in Cities (EiC), very good additional

support is given by mentors and other counselling agencies to students who have difficulties with motivation and confidence as a result of personal or social difficulties. Consequently, key barriers to students' interest in learning are very well addressed.

121. Child protection procedures are good. There is a college policy, in line with local area guidelines. The procedures to follow and the identity of the designated staff member are known by adults in the school. Students are made well aware of this issue as part of their personal and social education.
122. Procedures to ensure students' health and safety are satisfactory overall. Teachers make students well aware of health and safety issues in practical lessons in science, physical education and design and technology. As a result, the students' awareness of safety issues is generally good. Fire alarm testing and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out. The lack of a sprung floor for the teaching of dance presents an unacceptable risk of personal injury to a minority of students.
123. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline are very good overall. The main emphasis is on recognising and rewarding good behaviour and most students respond positively. Sanctions are clear. There is a well-defined, staged response to incidents, in class and at other times. As a result, class teachers are expected to deal routinely with low level misbehaviour or distraction and have a clear route for referring more serious incidents. Teachers use praise effectively and routinely, maintaining clear and consistent boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. As a result, attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good.
124. Procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour are good. The needs of students with significant educational and behavioural difficulties are regularly reviewed. Pastoral support plans and extra short-term support make a very good contribution to improving these students' behaviour and attitudes to college work. Incident monitoring is systematic, sanctions are clear and parents are appropriately informed and involved when needed. Measures to prevent and to deal with rare incidents of bullying are good. Measures and procedures to deal with exclusions are well established and fair.
125. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are very thorough indeed but their impact is reduced because of the poor attitudes of some students and their parents or carers. The college has invested a substantial amount of time, money and personnel to improve attendance since the previous inspection. It reviews the effectiveness of these procedures regularly and is constantly seeking further practicable ways to bring about improvement. There is good grasp of the range of underlying reasons behind the persistently high levels of absence based on systematic analysis of the absence data by category. The interrogation of that data is satisfactory.
126. Measures to promote attendance are good. For example, newsletters regularly raise the issue with parents, there is weekly recognition for the form with the highest attendance in each year group and annual recognition and rewards for students with full attendance. Education welfare assistants, in each house, attempt to make first-day contact with parents. There are good action plans in place to monitor and review the short-term impact of current tactics and longer-term strategies to address the root causes.
127. Procedures to monitor and support students' personal development are good. The monitoring system recognises promptly good attitudes to work. This recognition and reward provides students with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise the self-esteem of most students. The awarding of house and

college colours provides a well-planned set of increasingly challenging targets as the students get older.

128. The monitoring system also identifies and addresses concerns around attendance, punctuality, coursework and homework. Assemblies, tutor time and the personal, social and health education programme all provide students with good opportunities to reflect on the lives and needs of themselves and others. The college council provides students with good opportunities to raise and help address a wide variety of issues. The college organises a good range of sports and music clubs. Visits and football and netball teams further develop students' discipline, team spirit and a wider knowledge of surrounding areas and their communities. The students get a very good deal through this provision. It seeks, with a good degree of success, to include them fully in the life of the college.

Sixth form

129. The thoroughness of procedures to monitor and support students' attendance is good. Their impact is satisfactory.

130. In addition to the effective measures before the age of 16, the majority of students get financial support to stay on at school. For example, some students participate in the national pilot for the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme, whereby they get direct funding provided their attendance and progress are good. This contributes to better attendance because of its link to funding. It also reduces the extent to which they need to take on part-time work, thereby freeing up more time for learning. The amount of part-time working, outside the college day, still remains high.

131. The provision of a learning mentor means that students have an important additional source of advice and guidance on matters such as finance, time management and sustaining confidence in the face of difficulties. This provision has a good impact on students' attitudes to learning and citizenship.

Assessment

Strengths

- A good, comprehensive policy for the college.
- A well led and managed learning mentor programme.

Areas for improvement

- Target setting in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Consistency in the implementation of the college assessment policy.

132. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The college has addressed the main improvement recommended at the last inspection, namely to monitor the relative performance of the boys and the girls. It has yet to extend this to an analysis of particular groups of students, identified for example by ethnicity or levels of learning competence. There is some evidence of monitoring and analysis of the links between students' competence and their attendance.

133. A very detailed policy defines very well the links between assessment and reports. It also links very well the identification of special education needs and consequent targets.

134. The impact of this policy is inconsistent across subject departments. While some departments such as geography, ICT, mathematics, modern foreign languages and

science have very good procedures, others are less thorough. In most subjects, practice is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.

135. The links between assessment and target setting are satisfactory. The use of ICT to support systems of information and analysis is satisfactory.
136. The setting of targets in individual subjects is less well established than the overall targets at college level. The degree to which the wealth of data is used effectively to set targets is inconsistent. In English, each student in Years 7 to 9 has a termly target in reading, writing, spelling and listening. Clear targets, well understood by the students, are set in mathematics and geography but, in most subjects, target setting is less satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.
137. Recording procedures are good. Action on the basis of that data is inconsistent. Consequently, the degree to which assessment informs planning is inconsistent. The science and mathematics departments have made particularly good use of assessment findings to modify the curriculum. The mathematics department has adopted a modular course in Years 10 and 11 as a result of assessment findings, while the science department has moved towards a GNVQ qualification for some of the less competent students.
138. A learning mentor team, comprising a mentor manager, a full-time careers mentor and four part-time assistants, has been in post for just over one year. Their recording procedures are good and performance data is used to identify potential mentees. Of over 70 students mentored in the last year, one quarter exceeded expectations in their examination results. The good impact of this well-managed strategy results in the increased inclusion of these students in the success of the college.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very good identification and provision for individual learning needs.
- Very good support and guidance, resulting in good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency between subjects in the regularity and helpfulness of marking.
- Inconsistency in target setting between subjects.

139. Procedures for assessing standards and progress are good. All departments regularly assess work, and subject teachers monitor progress well, and particularly so in vocational subjects.
140. The diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs are very good. Teachers of health and social care, for example, assess students' assignments thoroughly and provide very good verbal and written feedback to help them improve their work.
141. Record keeping is rigorous and teachers track students' work so that future curriculum planning is well informed. The essential monitoring of progress is usually on a one-to-one basis. The relatively small size of groups allows time to review assignments and work with students individually.
142. Individual target setting is thorough in some subjects, but lacks consistency across the sixth form. The response to individual needs is very good in mathematics. Students are satisfied overall with the marking of their work in most subjects and with the advice they

are offered on how they might further improve their standards. They find this provision is inconsistent between subjects.

143. Procedures for academic and careers advice, support and guidance are good. The advice students receive when choosing their sixth-form courses is very thorough and well received by students. Most are satisfied with the guidance they receive on opportunities after leaving the college. A minority feels that this advice is heavily weighted towards higher education with less advice about other options.
144. Arrangements for reporting students' progress are broadly satisfactory and improving. This includes provision for six short reports each year. Current arrangements are accurate and give a clear picture of performance.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- The broadly positive views of parents and students.
- The open, approachable style of college staff.
- Regular, written communications.

Areas for improvement

- Information about students' progress, including their annual reports.
- Parental attendance at consultation evenings.

145. Overall, the partnership with parents makes a good contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. The good links reported in the previous inspection continue. Sixth-form students express positive views about their experiences. This report broadly supports these views.
146. More than 100 parents came to the pre-inspection meeting but only six per cent of parents replied to the questionnaire. Those parents are positive about what the school provides and achieves, confirming that most students like school, make good progress, are helped to become more mature and responsible and are expected to work hard. Nearly all consider that behaviour is good.
147. They are comfortable about approaching the college when concerns, uncertainties or problems arise. They value highly the leadership, management, teaching and wide range of extra-curricular activities. Those who expressed a view consider that those students who attend the college regularly get a good deal.
148. Some parents are concerned about inconsistencies in homework arrangements and the quality of information about students' progress.
149. As part of its very good practice to seek best value, the college listens to and consults parents on matters of importance to them.
150. The quality of printed information is broadly satisfactory. The strongest feature is the well-written, helpful information about provision at the college. This includes an attractive prospectus that defines expectations clearly and warmly invites a strong partnership with parents, particularly on such matters as regular attendance. Regular newsletters and the governors' annual report keep parents well informed about events and achievements in the life of the college. Printed details about courses available in the sixth form are very good.

151. Some aspects of students' annual reports are unsatisfactory. For example, reports in Years 7 and 8 do not compare the students' current performance with nationally expected standards. As a result, parents state the information they get lacks the overview they need. No reports were issued to sixth-form students in the most recent school year. As a result, parents and students in these year groups do not have a sufficiently clear picture of progress or performance.
152. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to students' learning and the life of the school. A good number attend and enjoy a wide range of social and celebratory events such as colours awards evenings, but their response to issues and events directly associated with their children's learning is patchy.
153. Discussions with students indicate that most have somebody at home who checks that set homework is done. Most parents respond to individual requests to discuss issues such as behaviour, attendance and punctuality. However, too many parents do not make sure that their sons or daughters attend college regularly. Whilst most parents of special needs students attend their reviews, attendance at annual parents' evenings is unsatisfactory. Only about half make use of such important opportunities to support the learning of their son or daughter.
154. Most students enjoy being in the sixth form and are proud of the college. They recognise and appreciate the help they were given to settle into the sixth form and most are impressed with the induction programme. They appreciate the wide choice of courses now available to match their interests. Most feel they are being taught very well and challenged to do their best.
155. Some students commented on the inconsistent quality and regularity of information they receive about their progress in different subjects. Inspectors agree with their comments.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The very good leadership of the headteacher results in high expectations, challenging targets and well-defined, manageable priorities for improvement.
- The headteacher and key staff manage by example, providing a high profile presence around the college that puts policy into practice.
- The excellent degree of shared commitment to value all students and provide as well as possible for them.
- Excellent financial planning based on the skilful acquisition and careful allocation of additional funding, targeted to support progress.
- Very good arrangements to monitor and review the overall performance of the college.

Areas for improvement

- The fulfilment of the statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship for all.
- The sharpness of some objectives within the improvement plan.
- Some aspects of staff deployment and the level of resources in some subjects.

156. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. It has the assurance, as well as the self-awareness, foresight and wisdom that comes from long experience, to chart the long-term future of the college and manage highly effectively the changes that are necessary to improve both provision and performance.
157. The headteacher's senior managers follow his example most conscientiously. Together, they have established a high degree of shared commitment to succeed.

Consequently, all know where they are heading and the very good management provides them with the necessary support to get there, as well as the shared confidence that they will. As a result, the college was granted specialist status as a technology college in 2000. The capacity for further improvement is very good.

158. The senior management team is highly reliable, regularly visible around the college and very well informed as a result of the shared commitment to advanced study and research as part of continuing professional development. Consequently, senior managers are increasingly well informed about strategies for improvement both locally and further afield. Key staff gain the confidence of their colleagues in managing changes to the curriculum and in setting challenging performance targets.
159. The well-defined links between senior managers and subject leaders provide support and accountability. As far as possible, subject departments are linked to a specific house, geographically close to their teaching areas. This provides a very good degree of organisational coherence and illustrates the very thoughtful and practical management arrangements that characterise the college. This was particularly well illustrated in the clarity and careful organisation of information received prior to the inspection.
160. Assured leadership and management are built on a strong foundation of shared intent. This is emphatically inclusive, declaring a commitment to provide opportunities for all to succeed and to enjoy learning through a partnership with parents that develops their confidence in the college and contributes to the quality of life in the local area. As a result, strong principles combine with a high level of practical management skills, particularly in the monitoring and review of performance.
161. The monitoring of college performance is good overall. The monitoring of teaching is very good. It is more thorough than the satisfactory evaluation of learning. The use of commercial systems to measure progress and set targets is satisfactory. Areas for improvement include the monitoring of different groups of students and the setting of individual targets before the age of 14 as an addition to the good arrangements to set targets for particular year groups at ages 14 and 16.
162. The implementation of policies and practice to support college improvement is well managed. These are well defined in college planning and in the planned actions of departments. Strategic planning is very good at college level and better than in subject improvement plans. The four key targets of the college provide a high degree of enduring challenge. They address standards, attendance, literacy and homework. These are shared also by the partner primary schools and reflect the local education authority strategy for improvement. As a result, there is a good degree of coherence in planning.
163. The impact of this shared intent is good. Many of the longer-term objectives provide a very high degree of challenge. For example, the ingrained characteristic of irregular attendance and the long-standing, low expectations of some parts of the local community require shifts in attitudes that the college can influence but over which it cannot exercise a high degree of control. Where it can do so, for example in improving standards of literacy, the impact is improving. The perseverance of managers, their readiness to try new tactics and their enduring commitment to make a difference are strong features.
164. The overall quality of management is also very good because it shares a common purpose and is supported by good systems of communication. Roles and responsibilities are well defined within job descriptions and the firm leadership of the

headteacher defines common agenda items across departments. Regular meetings of the heads of English, mathematics, science and ICT result in very good monitoring arrangements for students in Year 7. The move to setting in these subjects in Year 7 enables the work of individual students across these subjects to be monitored more rigorously and regularly. These arrangements illustrate how the college is becoming increasingly more effective in linking changes in provision to improvements in performance.

165. The leadership and management of provision for students with special educational needs are excellent. This department, influential across the whole college, is organised and administered most efficiently. Students' progress is very carefully monitored. Records, detailed and completely up to date, are produced to exemplary standards.
166. Subject leadership and management are good. Teamwork is good. As a result, the long-term absence of several subject leaders has been very well managed. The links between the priorities of subject improvement planning and the college plan are very good. Consequently, nearly everyone is pulling and heading in the same direction.
167. The contribution of governors is satisfactory overall. They have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, based primarily on information provided by the headteacher and key staff and through their involvement in sub-committees to address attendance and behaviour issues.
168. Their role in shaping the direction of the school is unsatisfactory because they do not yet play a prominent role at the drafting stage of long-term planning. They define only a minority of items for agenda, most are determined by others, including the local education authority. As a result, the strategic part of their role is not as developed as it should be. Also, they do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students and to provide for religious education in the sixth form.
169. The management and use of financial resources are excellent because the knowledge and understanding of the headteacher and the bursar are very high, both in the acquisition and the allocation of resources.
170. Overall, financial planning is good. It is matched rigorously to the well-defined core priorities but the various strands of funding from sources beyond the main budget, for example EiC funding, are not always as explicit in documentation as they are in the highly astute and well-informed thinking of the headteacher. Consequently, the tracking and evaluation of the impact of additional funding on standards, improvements and the quality of provision, can become difficult for governors and other parties.
171. Additional, specific grants are acquired successfully. They are used effectively to bring about change, to improve standards and to provide quality resources for teaching and learning. The pattern of expenditure matches well the priorities, needs and circumstances of the college. Financial incentives are widely used to stimulate curriculum change. Good use is made of new technology to manage the college budget and other financial resources derived from local and national grants.
172. Best value principles are applied very well because consultation with the local education authority, Cityworks and industry is very good. Comparisons are drawn from commercial questionnaires about students' attitudes in the sixth form. The profile of expenditure is broadly similar to the national pattern.

173. The provision and use of learning resources are good. The library is very well managed, providing well for students to undertake research. Its impact on students' learning is satisfactory. It is not better than this because its planned use and the value it will add are not yet written into schemes of work and improvement plans.
174. Expenditure on resources is high. Big improvements have been made in the provision of computers as a result of the granting of specialist college status in 2000. This is now well above average. Despite this, inspectors found that in several subjects there is still insufficient opportunity to meet fully the requirements of the revised National Curriculum.
175. There is a satisfactory match of teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is a good range of experience and expertise. In several subject areas, the long-term absence of key staff has been very well managed. The induction of new staff, including the newly qualified, is very good and the provision for professional development thereafter is very well managed.
176. The accommodation is satisfactory. It is good in many subject areas, with suites of rooms in ICT, English, modern foreign languages, mathematics and craft and design technology. It is unsatisfactory in art and design and physical education. In physical education, the restricted indoor space creates problems when large groups of students are timetabled at the same time. The limited outdoor playing areas of one soccer and one hockey pitch restrict both curriculum and extra-curricular team games.
177. Corridors and social areas have good displays of students' work to celebrate their successes. A strong feature is the display of results and progress outside ICT rooms, providing an incentive for students to complete their work. The study support centre is just adequate for the present number of students. The development of ICT across the curriculum is restricted because of the unavailability of time in the four computer rooms, which are heavily used for the teaching of discrete ICT lessons.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Excellent leadership has transformed provision and expectations at a very fast rate.
- Very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Very good management of the curriculum includes many students across a very wide range of competencies.
- Standards are higher than the most recent examination results.
- Very good monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- Accommodation.
- Cost effective provision.

Areas for improvement

- Managing continuity with the curriculum before the age of 16.
- The management of provision for key skills, particularly those associated with personal development.
- Provision for religious education to meet statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

178. The very strong impact of the leadership of the sixth form is well illustrated by:

- its tripling in size over the last four years;
- the very high rates of retention that result from the excellent provision of courses that are very well matched to the needs and circumstances of the students;
- the increasingly high aspirations of the students, nearly all of whom are encouraged to consider continuing education, including higher education, after age 18.

179. Teamwork is a strong feature of the very good management. Several subjects have named leaders in the sixth form, including mathematics and geography, and the provision for vocational courses is very well managed.

180. The monitoring of teaching is very good within a programme that is well led by the deputy headteacher and the head of sixth form and closely linked to EIC objectives. Target setting is good and commercial systems to support this have been introduced. It is too early to evaluate their impact.

181. There are very good arrangements to monitor individuals' progress through a planned programme of twice-termly reviews. The monitoring and evaluation of provision and performance in key skills are unsatisfactory. Where teaching groups are small, the development of key skills involving leadership and teamwork is weak. The teaching of literacy skills is unsatisfactory because not all subjects identify explicitly in their planning how the requirements and opportunities within syllabi will be taught.

182. Financial planning is very good. Consequently, provision is made well within budget. This is no mean achievement, given the wide range of courses provided. Provision is cost-effective.

Resources

183. The provision of learning resources is good. This has a particularly good impact on students' skills in using computers. As a result, they study in depth, using the Internet well for this purpose.

184. The deployment of staff is good overall. However, within health and social care it is unsatisfactory because five teachers teach the course and many students find it difficult to complete work in five different areas of the course simultaneously.

185. There have been major improvements in accommodation. A weakness at the time of the last inspection, this is now very good.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

186. The college provides well for its students and their performance is improving. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors, teachers and other associated with the work of the college should:

(1) Improve students' attitudes to attendance and, where possible, the commitment of parents and carers to achieve levels much closer to the average for all schools nationally by:

- tracking and target setting of different groups of students, for example the more competent, the competent and the less competent;
- increasing the provision for home visiting and counselling;
- increasing the partnership with primary schools as part of EiC;
- increasing the involvement of the business community and the range of support agencies as part of SEAZ;
- considering 'student-student' mentoring within houses (an extension of the 'buddy' principle).

Paragraphs: 24, 25, 26, 27, 53, 54, 55, 56, 231

(2) Improve students writing and speaking skills in all subjects by:

- establishing baseline competencies at age 11 and annual targets thereafter in all subjects of the curriculum;
- identifying needs and opportunities explicitly in the schemes of work for each subject;
- including key objectives in long- and medium-term planning;
- using the materials of the National Oracy Project and the findings of the National Literacy Strategy to raise awareness and extend the range of teaching and learning methods;
- including an annual assessment of these skills in each student's report profile in each subject studied.

Paragraphs: 12, 15, 34, 67, 78, 194, 195, 205, 206, 207, 208, 233, 256, 266, 280

(3) Raise standards and levels of achievement in music at age 14 by:

- establishing baseline competencies for each student on entry to the college;
- providing better planned provision for performance and composition in lessons;
- improving the validity of statutory assessment procedures at age 14;
- improving attitudes in Year 9 and setting targets for continuing provision to ages 16 and 18.

Paragraphs: 16, 309, 312, 313, 317, 318

(4) Set annual targets for all students in all subjects between the ages of 11 and 14 by:

- Establishing baseline assessments linked to the levels of the National Curriculum for each student on entry to the college for all subjects that are not tested nationally at age 11;
- using these to set targets for groups of students, for example the more competent, the competent and the less competent;
- considering the use of initial target ranges that would be narrowed over time as a result of monitoring performance.

Paragraphs: 136, 161, 273, 284, 337

(5) Assure the more consistent application of assessment policies across all subjects by:

- reviewing the level of shared understanding of current policies and identifying any obstacles to consistent application;
- sharing the current good practice, for example in geography and English, more systematically across the college;
- tracking the links between marking and assessment as part of the monitoring of teaching and learning;
- defining precise success criteria for the evaluation of policy and practice, expressed in terms of improved outcomes;
- considering the mentoring of heads of subjects to support consistent practice;
- improving levels of technical understanding in the interpretation and use of data by heads of subject.

Paragraphs: 81, 134, 237, 262, 284

Sixth form

(6) Improve provision the in key skills of personal development by:

- identifying needs and opportunities more explicitly in schemes of work for each subject;
- applying the principles within the syllabi of vocational courses to other courses;
- working in partnership with local employers to track their development within students' part-time working commitments.

Paragraphs: 44, 85, 87, 112, 181, 392

(7) Improve levels of attendance by:

- undertaking and sharing an analysis of reasons for and patterns of non-attendance;
- monitoring the impact of provision on different groups of students;
- setting individual targets;
- providing opportunities for student-student mentoring.

Paragraphs: 57, 132

(8) Improve individual target setting in each subject studied by:

- extending the use of commercial analyses;
- improving teachers' understanding of the interpretation and use of such data.

Paragraphs: 132, 142

(9) Improve provision for spiritual development, including the provision for religious education by:

- providing timetabled provision for religious education to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus;
- identifying the needs and opportunities for spiritual development in subject schemes of work;
- evaluating improvement by concentrating on demonstrated behaviours and attitudes.

Paragraphs: 116, 168

Each section of the report includes an opening list of strengths and areas for improvement. In addition to consolidating the strengths, it is recommended that consideration be given to including in the action plan, at the discretion of the headteacher, governors and staff, some of the identified areas for improvement.

The inspection team considers that the most significant of these are:

- Provision for the development and application of thinking, memory and numeracy skills.
- Provision of more opportunities for students to exercise initiative, take risks, make decisions and solve problems.
- The facilities for dance, including sprung flooring and adequate changing facilities.
- The range and variety of teaching methods so that students participate more actively in lessons.
- The management of the curriculum to provide greater continuity from 14 to 19 years.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of provision for parents' evenings.
- Staff deployment in mathematics and health and social care.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	157
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	10	22	58	62	3	1	0
Percentage	6	14	37	40	2	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	19	29	5	0	0	0
Percentage	5	34	52	9	0	0	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	1170	171
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	504	33

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	30	4
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	390	7

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	24

Pupil mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	39
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	43

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	13.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	118	122	240

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	49	48
	Girls	62	54	53
	Total	96	103	101
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	40 (38)	43 (41)	42 (28)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (13)	18 (15)	11 (4)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	58	50
	Girls	61	66	52
	Total	105	124	102
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	45 (35)	53 (49)	43 (33)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (15)	17 (23)	6 (8)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	130	114	244

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	36	94	112
	Girls	25	84	100
	Total	61	178	212
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	25 (25)	73 (77)	87 (84)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	26.6
	National	39.0

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	n/a
	National		n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	27	23	50

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	15	19	34
	Average point score per candidate	8.3	7.7	8.0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	12	12	24	5	9	14

	Average point score per candidate	5.4	4.7	5.0	12.0	10.0	10.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1323
Any other minority ethnic group	14

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	38	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	83.4
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.41

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	111

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	18.7
Key Stage 4	14.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	13
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	20
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	3,723,427
Total expenditure	3,665,712
Expenditure per pupil	2,740
Balance brought forward from previous year	27,158
Balance carried forward to next year	84,873

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,341
Number of questionnaires returned	85

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	45	45	8	0	2
My child is making good progress in college.	66	32	2	0	0
Behaviour in the college is good.	36	54	6	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	47	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	58	40	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	49	6	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	74	26	0	0	0
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	18	0	0	1
The college works closely with parents.	47	44	8	0	1
The college is well led and managed.	61	39	0	0	0
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	46	2	0	1
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	32	1	0	5

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are now rising because good leadership and skilful management provide good support, particularly for newly appointed teachers. This results in high levels of shared commitment to the values of the college.
- Students achieve well in English because they make gains in confidence and improve their reading skills as a result of very good specialist support and very good relationships within lessons.
- The very good planning of lessons enables students to learn well because it sustains their interest and is generally well matched to their needs. As a result, they concentrate well.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of students who achieve above average results at ages 14 and 16.
- Standards of writing and speaking.
- The rigour and degree of challenge in a number of lessons.
- The use of ICT to raise standards.

187. The proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 in English was broadly in line with the average for similar schools but well below that for all schools nationally. Results have been broadly similar to the 2001 standards each year since the last inspection in 1996. Results in English literature were well below the national average for all schools. Achievement is satisfactory when compared with previous results at age 14 and the well below average standards of students when they enter the college at age 11.

188. The girls out-performed the boys at the higher grades in both subjects but, in 2001, there was a significant improvement in the boys' performance. They nearly matched the girls' results. The proportion of students obtaining a grade in the A*-G range in 2001 was below the national average because a minority of Year 11 students attend school only occasionally and consequently fail to complete their coursework. Nearly all who attended regularly obtained at least a grade G.

189. Results in national tests at age 14 in 2001 were above the average for similar schools but well below average for all schools and lower than in mathematics at the college. Approximately two-fifths reached the standard expected compared with two-thirds nationally. Achievement is good when comparisons are made between these results and what the students knew, understood and could do on entry to the college.

190. Over the last three years, both the boys and the girls have been closer to their age group nationally than they have been in mathematics and science. This indicates that the additional time provided for English is paying dividends and having an impact on progress and standards.

191. Students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because their needs are very promptly and accurately identified, careful provision is made and their progress is monitored regularly. In particular, the additional support results in a marked improvement in the students' reading ages. Good features of the provision for the much smaller number of students who speak English as an additional language include placing them in the top set, together with opportunities for other students to help them improve the fluency and accuracy of their spoken language.
192. Students can choose to study drama and media studies at age 14. Most achieve well in drama to reach standards at age 16 that are broadly in line with those expected nationally. They make good progress because good teaching helps them to make good gains in confidence and in the ability to concentrate, for example when sustaining a role in improvisation. Standards in media studies are similar overall to those in drama but there is a wider range, reflecting the much greater numbers who choose to study the subject and the weak literacy skills of some students. Progress overall is satisfactory.
193. Standards in lessons and in the work by both boys and girls sampled during the inspection are below those usually found nationally at both ages 14 and 16. Most students work hard and do their best because expectations are good and the work is suitably matched to their needs. Consequently, their achievement is satisfactory. It is good at age 14 because more emphasis is now placed on teaching literacy skills. It is too early to evaluate the impact of the introduction of setting in Year 7.
194. Standards in writing are below those expected nationally at ages 14 and 16. The small number of more competent students reaches the nationally expected standard because they can develop their ideas clearly and at length in writing with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The large majority falls short, and about one third well short, because they struggle to improve their spelling and punctuation and lack the skills to vary the way in which they construct their sentences. As a result, they do not express fully their understanding of what they have studied. Standards in reading at ages 14 and 16 are better but remain below those expected nationally. Achievement is good, particularly at age 14, given the very low standards of reading on entry to the college.
195. Listening skills are satisfactory but the range of competence very wide. Speaking skills are below the nationally expected standards at ages 14 and 16. Careful listening to each other was a feature of many lessons but sometimes impatience resulted in missed opportunities to learn from one another. When the format of the lesson placed a strong emphasis on speaking and listening, many students responded well and expressed themselves with a satisfactory regard for standard English. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, they listened with respect to each other's views within a formal debate. On other occasions, when talk was more spontaneous, many lacked the skills to express themselves fluently and at length in order to sustain ideas, explanations or dialogue. Few appreciated that their personal understanding might improve by listening carefully to the ideas of others.
196. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory across all years. It was never less than satisfactory in the 21 lessons seen during the inspection. Occasionally, outstanding teaching was seen and the immediate challenge is to disseminate such highly commendable practice more widely.
197. Where teaching and learning were satisfactory rather than good, there was not always enough rigour and pace to challenge students sufficiently. Questions were generally

used well to test the recall of knowledge, sometimes the degree of understanding and, occasionally, to stimulate discussion and the exchange of ideas.

198. There were instances, however, where teachers accepted too readily brief and superficial answers and failed to challenge students to draw out a more considered and extended response. Consequently, too few demands were made of the students to think for themselves and the emphasis was on the tasks to be accomplished rather than on stimulating analysis, reflection and enquiry. The department is taking steps to develop questioning techniques to the rigorous level seen in the best lessons.
199. The planning and preparation of lessons were strengths and teachers took account of students' individual needs well. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson where the careful selection of lesson material enabled less competent students to understand and explain the link between people's characters and their preferences for leisure activities. One area for improvement is the use of ICT to raise standards and to assure the fulfilment of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Despite the very good provision at the college, such is the level of demand that students rarely progress beyond wordprocessing. Consequently, this aspect of their learning and progress is only satisfactory.
200. Students' behaviour is very well managed. Consequently, mutual respect invariably results in a readiness to concentrate and work well. Occasional lapses are dealt with well so that the overall commitment to work is not unduly interrupted. Students know what is expected of them because the learning objectives are communicated effectively at the start of each lesson, followed by clear explanations of how to approach the work.
201. Teachers take good care to ensure that students with special educational needs and those few with English as an additional language are involved in the lesson and make progress at least in line with others. This is done through modifying the work to take account of their needs and the judicious use of support during the lesson. Good use is made of assessments to monitor the progress of all students and realistic but challenging targets are set for students at the end of Years 9 and 11. Care has been taken to make the classrooms attractive and good use is made of a wide range of resources.
202. The leadership and management of the subject are both good. The leadership provides clear direction through good development planning that is well linked to the key objectives of the college improvement plan. Priorities are well defined, with a strong emphasis on raising standards through improving teaching and learning.
203. As a result of good management, a high level of commitment, determination and common purpose are strong features of the team of teachers, some of whom are newly appointed. They are well supported and guided. As a result, they are already contributing to improvements in the quality of students' learning. Teachers are aware of the challenge to raise standards of speaking and writing and are addressing them in a determined manner. For example, there is very good provision of additional lessons beyond the college day to prepare students for national tests and public examinations as well as a good range of extra-curricular activities to promote interest, enjoyment and personal development.
204. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There has been good improvement in some aspects of provision but literacy skills remain weak. Reading skills on entry to the college have actually declined over the last three years. Much successful work is undertaken to remedy this. Assessment has improved significantly

with the more effective use of performance data when evaluating teaching and planning. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now done systematically and well, and strategies to disseminate good practice are in place.

Literacy throughout the curriculum

205. Standards of literacy for students of compulsory school age are poor. Their weak writing and speaking skills slow their progress and prevent them from achieving higher standards. In many students' written work, there are inaccuracies in spelling and an inability to give expression to thought in well-structured, extended writing. This was seen, for example, in art and design where students relied on published texts rather than trying to develop their own written evaluations of the work done in sketchbooks.
206. Many students do not speak fluently. They lack confidence, are hesitant and cannot give explanations or sustain dialogue beyond a few brief statements. When teachers give priority to developing this skill, they demonstrate a reasonable competency. Too often, however, less emphasis is given to encouraging students to speak at length. Even in modern foreign languages where prominence is given to listening and writing skills, speaking skills do not receive the same degree of attention.
207. Reading is generally satisfactory and at the expected standard for students at ages 14 and 16. Students can understand subject texts and identify the key points in what they are reading. In mathematics, for example, Year 9 students were able to extract information from a question on probability. Listening skills are also reasonably well developed.
208. Improvement in writing and speaking is well managed in several subjects. In geography, for example, Year 9 students receive guidance on how to complete a passage of extended writing and as a result, the quality of their work has improved. Under the leadership of the head of English, teachers have recently received training on how to develop students' formal writing skills and a strategy is now in place across the curriculum to improve this competency. Each member of the English department is attached to a curriculum area to help with this. The college has decided that the development of students' writing skills is a priority but is also alert to the need to address weaknesses in students' speaking skills.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good because it concentrates on improving the standards of all students.
- Teachers are highly motivated and provide many extra-curricular lessons to support students' learning.
- There is very good, additional provision for talented students.

Areas for improvement

- Results in national tests and GCSE examinations.
- More full-time teachers to assure effective continuity in students' learning.
- The planned time for mathematics in the curriculum.

209. Standards in mathematics are below average when students enter the college at age 11.

210. National test results in 2001 at age 14 were well above the average for similar schools, indicating a good level of progress and achievement at age 14. They were well below the average for all schools but the number of less competent students at the college is very much greater than is the case nationally. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science and above those in English.
211. The girls reached higher standards than the boys. Over the last three years, results have shown a rising trend, ahead of the rate of improvement nationally. The gap between the college and the national picture is closing. Those who attend regularly, invariably do well. Those who attend infrequently, do not.
212. Results are getting better due to good teaching. Good use is made of the National Numeracy Initiative (NNI) and of opportunities for accelerated learning. Consequently, most students make good gains in mathematical knowledge and skills.
213. At age 16, GCSE results in 2001 were broadly in line with the average for similar schools. They were well below the average for all schools. The boys did better than the girls by a significant margin, a reversal of the pattern in previous years. Results have been steady over time. Overall, results indicate satisfactory achievement but progress is slower after age 14. Consequently, students achieved less well at age 16 in mathematics than in their other subjects.
214. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below those expected nationally at ages 14 and 16. However, learning and achievement in lessons are good. Year 7 students now show better skills and improved methods in mental arithmetic than in higher years and teachers' planning makes good use of the National Numeracy Initiative. The more competent students in Year 7 understand factors and products well. The less competent students multiply and divide by multiples of ten.
215. At age 14, the standards of the small minority of more competent students are well above national expectations. Knowledge, skills and understanding of trigonometry, quadratic equations and angle properties are good. In a Year 9 lesson, students worked with very good understanding of exclusive events when producing probability trees. The quality and presentation of graph work is unsatisfactory.
216. Standards at age 16 are below those expected nationally. Those of the small minority of more competent students are very high, indicating a very good level of challenge and expectation in the teaching. They use the integration and differentiation methods of finding areas and tangents related to graphs. Work is covered at a rapid pace, with students showing good ability to carry out the mathematical processes required. However, their depth of comprehension of the concepts involved is often slight.
217. Progress is good because the content of lessons is well matched to individual needs. The provision for the most competent students is particularly good. For example, talented students are given challenging opportunities to work at a level beyond that expected for their age group. Less competent students are given clear explanations, methods and individual support. As a result, they improve their skills in manipulating number and their understanding of basic concepts. For example, some students were able to check the validity of their answers by rounding and approximating numbers.
218. The small minority who speak English as an additional language have received support sufficient to enable them to learn in line with their ability. Those with special educational needs are well supported by skilled classroom assistants who help others in addition to target students. Gifted and talented students are very well supported by work matched

to their needs rather than their age. Accelerated learning was seen in a Year 8 class in which students had completed all the work for that year and were making very good progress calculating areas of sectors of circles. A Year 8 student was seen studying for a module test for her GCSE examination. A Year 11 student is studying for A-level in mathematics and was observed working with the function representing circles.

219. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory and often very good or better. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very skilled in planning the sequence of lessons building on work covered previously. Where teaching and learning are very good, the more competent students are challenged to think for themselves and identify underlying concepts of topics being studied. Consequently, they learn to develop links between different aspects of mathematics and the real world. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on circles, students were eager to calculate the circumference of the London Eye. The best teaching develops interest in the subject for students of all abilities. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, less competent students were eager to show their answers.
220. Very good relationships and mutual respect have resulted in good classroom management and, as a consequence, students learn well.
221. Leadership and management are both good. Responding to recent changes, all members of the department have co-ordinated their responsibilities to provide a well-run department. Resources and accommodation are used well. All specialist teachers have their own rooms fitted with computerised projectors for teaching. Despite these very good features, one aspect of staffing is unsatisfactory; the number of full-time specialists is low. This has resulted in groups being taught by more than one teacher and fragmented learning for some students.
222. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Well-managed changes to the curriculum after the age of 14 now provide courses that are better matched to students' needs; ICT resources are better used as a management tool and teaching resource and the National Numeracy Initiative has been successfully introduced into lessons for students between the ages of 11 and 14. However, time allocated for mathematics is less than is usually the case nationally.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising at age 14.
- Good teaching, with particular strengths in the teachers' management of students and in their subject knowledge and understanding.
- A curriculum that interests the students because it is well matched to their needs.
- Good links with partner primary schools and other outside agencies support good progress.
- Good use of ICT improves the quality of students' learning by encouraging good skills in research and recording.

Areas for improvement

- Standards reached by students at the age of 16.
- Achievement of more competent students.
- Monitoring of teachers' marking and the presentation of students' work.

- Technical support to provide more investigative work in order to improve the quality of learning.

223. Standards on entry to the college are currently well below national expectations. Previously they have been very low. Students make satisfactory progress at age 14. Results in 2001 were well above the average for similar schools but remained well below the average for all schools nationally. They marked a good degree of improvement since the age of 11, at which time, results had been well below the average for similar schools and in the lowest five per cent of all schools nationally.
224. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in 2001. The standards reached by girls have improved steadily since the last inspection. Overall, results at age 14 show an improving trend. Results in 2001 were comparable to those in mathematics.
225. Results at age 16 in 2001 were broadly in line with similar schools but well below the national average for all schools. Approximately one fifth obtained grades A*-C compared with approximately half of all candidates nationally. Results have remained steady since the last inspection. Very few obtain the highest grades (A*-B) but the number is increasing because the monitoring of individual's progress is increasingly effective.
226. Results overall at age 16 are affected adversely by the irregular attendance of more than a tenth of the year group and the very infrequent attendance of a smaller number. Consequently, the number of students obtaining the full range of grades (A*-G) in 2001 was well below the national average with the girls performing better than the boys. However, boys did much better than girls in reaching the higher grades (A*-C) because they were more highly motivated to attend the additional revision sessions.
227. The few students entered for the single science award in 2001 obtained the lowest grades (F-G) with about one in three being ungraded. Overall, students' performance in science was below that of all other GCSE examination subjects taken in 2001.
228. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. It reaches expected levels in Years 7, 9 and 10. However, in Years 8 and 11, students do not achieve as well as in other years.
229. In Year 8, whilst students make gains in knowledge in lessons, more than usual have difficulty in retaining and applying it because their memories are short and their understanding weak. Year 11 students have a sound knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and principles but they have some difficulties in their application to other settings.
230. Those with special educational needs achieve well because there is a well-planned response to their educational targets. These are well linked to the subject content. All other students, including the small minority who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. When presented with opportunities to plan, obtain, present and consider evidence from investigative work, many students achieve well. However, the levels of technical support staff have not kept pace with increased laboratory provision and the wider demands on technicians' time. This has restricted the opportunities for practical work.
231. Achievement is better in Year 10 than in Year 11 because the content of the recently introduced GNVQ course is better matched to their need. In Year 11, the achievement of a significant minority of students is unsatisfactory because attendance is sporadic, and

in some cases, rare. This affects adversely the completion of coursework and continuity of learning.

232. Recently, there has been greater emphasis on developing literacy skills. Some more competent students are starting to make better progress in speaking and listening because questions are used well and they are now challenged to answer at greater length and in greater detail. Consequently, standards are rising. The less competent students still lack the confidence and skills. Consequently, the quality and range of their responses is very restricted, both in answering questions and within discussions.
233. Overall, students' standards in writing and handwriting are weak. Generally, presentation and pride in written, diagrammatic and tabular work are unsatisfactory. The spelling of technical words is satisfactory because teachers pay close attention to the students' difficulties, drawing attention to key words. Students have weak skills in scientific observational drawing and displaying experimental results. Aspects of numeracy are used as required but there is no policy or planned scheme to guarantee that their application in science is matched to students' achievement in mathematics. The accurate plotting of graphs and their interpretation are particularly significant areas of weakness because they restrict the overall standards of scientific method and enquiry.
234. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Particular strengths are the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and their management of students. However, in an unsatisfactory lesson for more competent Year 8 students, the teacher did not control sufficiently the immature behaviour of a small group of girls who disrupted the progress in learning for other students.
235. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are used to good advantage in many ways. For instance, when making complex scientific ideas simple, extending thinking skills by asking suitably matched questions and providing instructions that pre-empt any pitfalls the students might make.
236. Where good teaching results in good learning, lesson objectives are displayed and shared before and at the end of a lesson. All 12 members of the department have completed accredited training in the use of ICT and their new skills are beginning to influence methods of teaching with a wider range of techniques and applications. For example, in a very good lesson, Year 8 students used a computer to label parts of the human digestive system by referring to a large display chart. Their achievement in the use of the computer was very good and they made good gains in the spelling and understanding of new scientific words.
237. Procedures for assessing and monitoring standards and progress through regular end of unit tests are well developed. However, the monitoring of teachers' marking of homework, classwork and the presentation of students' work is less effective and this means, particularly in Years 7 to 9, that students are less sure of how they are learning and the progress they are making.
238. The leadership and management of the department are both good. The support and commitment of the established team of experienced and enthusiastic teachers, technician and the college's senior management are key factors in the direction the department is moving to meet the needs of the students and to raise standards. The well-conceived department development plan reflects closely the aims and values of the college.

239. At present, the subject is undergoing major curriculum changes to make the content more relevant to the students' needs. The preparation and short-term planning to meet these changes are thorough. Long-term implications of the changes are less clear, for example, the science courses to be offered post-16 when students who have GNVQ qualifications move into the sixth form in 2003. The amount of time allocated to science for some students following an ICT course in Year 10 restricts the full range of experiences which students in other sets in the year group enjoy. The department is involved in numerous initiatives which, through appropriate delegation, are contributing to improving students' achievement. Curriculum continuity with the contributory primary schools, the provision of an alternative curriculum in Year 10 and Year 11 and use of ICT as a tool to extend learning in science, are examples of effective and worthwhile initiatives.
240. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Most recently, the rate of improvement has increased. Standards in Year 9 are rising and resources, especially books and equipment and materials for ICT, have improved significantly. Suitable accommodation for teaching science has been provided to meet the needs of the increasing number of students. Teaching is monitored regularly and setting of student groups has been introduced. However, the attainment of 16-year-old students remains stubbornly below national expectations and the very good provision and support for practical science has declined.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- GCSE results that are well above the national average.
- The maintenance of the high standards recognised at the time of the last inspection.
- Good teaching and learning between the ages of 14 and 16 supported by good assessment procedures.
- The very good provision for learning for the small number of students who speak English as an additional language.
- Students' attentive and hardworking attitudes, particularly after the age of 14.

Areas for improvement

- Material resources, including access to ICT.
- The scheme of work and assessment procedures for students between the ages of 11 and 14.

241. Standards on entry to the college at the age of 11 are well below those usually found nationally.
242. The GCSE examination results in art and design were significantly above the national average in 2001. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades A-C was well above average.
243. Achievement at the age of 14 is satisfactory. Students have an awareness of 20th century art and are able to produce work in the style of artists such as Jackson Pollock and Bridget Riley. Whilst they have experience of a range of activities like drawing, painting, graphics, printing and ceramics, a significant weakness is that the course does not provide for the step-by-step development of skills, nor sufficient opportunities for drawing from direct observation.

244. The pace of progress increases for those who choose to study the subject beyond the age of 14. Consequently, they achieve well and produce standards at age 16 that are better than one usually finds nationally.
245. The well-planned teaching places good emphasis on studying, applying and extending artistic techniques through the study of major artists. For example, a study of portraiture including Rembrandt, Delores Fairman and Salvador Dali results in students learning the proportions of the face, which they use effectively in their work. Experimental work on portraits leads to fractured images and to the creation of ceramic masks. The students know the value of preparatory drawings. They select, enlarge and adapt images for the range of design briefs in the GCSE course, as in a ceramics module based on Lichtenstein, where the students learn coiling, joining and shaping techniques to produce imaginative pottery designs.
246. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It gets increasingly better as the students get older.
247. Up to the age of 14 it is satisfactory. Learning is sound and most students make steady progress with satisfactory gains in knowledge and skills. Where teaching is good, there is good understanding of the formal elements of art, as in one Year 7 lesson where students were introduced to the skills of proportion when drawing a scene using graphite. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, the balance of the lesson is poor with students insufficiently engaged and challenged in their work.
248. Teaching is good after the age of 14. It ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Students learn well as a result. In the best teaching, good subject knowledge enables students to develop an awareness of artists and designers from a variety of cultures and periods and to explore this aspect of the subject in their own work. In one lesson, a Year 10 student used Internet research to develop a Japanese style motif in oil pastel, having previously produced etchings at a local print studio. High quality demonstrations, review sessions and individual tuition, together with very good interpersonal relationships, have a powerful impact on standards.
249. Nearly all students are well motivated and generally concentrate well because the development of learning is well planned. Students answer simple questions promptly and accurately but they are not confident in offering ideas and opinions in more open discussion. By Year 11, students are confident in using books to extract information and make notes on the artists they are studying. Whilst students are able to use ICT, access to computers within the department is limited. Students demonstrate very high standards of presentation skills in their sketchbooks and project work. Attitudes to learning are good. Students with special educational needs make at least satisfactory and often good progress.
250. The good teaching and learning result from good leadership and well-managed provision. The high standards at GCSE reported in the last inspection have been sustained. There is a good commitment to building on achievements and to further improving standards. The department is aware of the need to improve the scheme of work between the ages of 11 and 14, concentrating on the improvement of skills and the improvement of assessment procedures, which are insufficiently linked at present to National Curriculum levels.

251. Resources in art are poor. There are insufficient basic resources to allow students a good range of choice in their examination work or to provide for the required improvements before the age of 14.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Steady improvement in examination performance at age 16.
- Procedures for setting short-term targets and use of data, particularly between the ages of 14 and 16.
- Good standards of practical work.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of the quality of both teaching and learning, particularly the match of tasks to different levels of competence.
- Using the standards stated in the National Curriculum as the basis for periodic assessment.
- The teaching of design skills.

252. Standards on entry to the college at age 11 are low because many have had limited previous opportunities to develop their technological knowledge, skills and understanding.

253. Achievement at age 14 is satisfactory but standards are below those expected nationally because design skills are unsatisfactory. Practical skills are satisfactory.

254. The small minority of more competent students reach standards at age 14 that are higher than those usually found nationally. A larger proportion make good progress and achieve well in practical work because they use a range of hand and power equipment safely and confidently. Consequently, some work of a good standard is produced at age 14, including a visually arresting textiles project to create a culturally rich wall-hanging for a museum. The standards of more than half fall below those expected nationally because their presentational skills, both graphical and written, are poor; they use colour carelessly and their research skills are unsatisfactory. Sometimes, unsatisfactory attitudes result in unfinished work.

255. Students' results at age 16 in 2001 compare favourably with their performance in their other subjects but were below the national average. There has been a trend of steady improvement since the last inspection with a dip in 2001.

256. Standards at age 16 are below those expected nationally, but higher than recent results. The more competent minority are working at standards higher than those usually found nationally. The boys are more accomplished in their practical work, whereas the design folders of the girls are better. The work of the majority of less competent students is sometimes superficial because their research skills remain limited, their written work is brief, the annotation of ideas is weak and evaluations are incomplete or omitted. Those taking the GNVQ manufacturing course are performing to the expected standard overall and written work is generally neatly presented, with good use of ICT, including the use of the Internet.

257. Achievement at age 16 is satisfactory overall. Some make good gains in research skills when, for example in Year 11, they look at various forms of stationery and examine how cultural differences can influence clothing design.
258. Standards and achievement are satisfactory after the age of 16. Students on the AS textiles course are producing work of a satisfactory standard overall. Good work is seen in a project researching 1950's dress styles and good research into methods of applying colour to fabric. Students on the product design course are producing work of satisfactory standard when, for example, they model card for a display unit. The standard of computer aided design (CAD) is good. Some written assignments are unsatisfactory because the understanding of technical detail is unsatisfactory.
259. Students with special educational needs learn well. Those with educational and behavioural difficulties know what is expected of them in practical work. Work is generally matched satisfactorily to their needs. The work for the gifted and talented needs to provide greater challenge.
260. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in the sixth form. Where it is good, teachers use their specialist knowledge well to plan well paced lessons. As a result, the students generally work hard, concentrate well and show a good level of interest in completing the tasks set. For example, in a Year 11 GNVQ manufacturing lesson, these features of good teaching captured very well the interest of the students as they looked at batch production methods and industrial practice.
261. It is the degree of pace that usually distinguishes the good from the satisfactory lessons. When the pace drops, so too do expectations and, as a result, some students are easily distracted.
262. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good features are the use of assessment within the well-managed development and review of schemes of work and the successful links with the local primary schools. Areas for improvement include more rigorous monitoring of teaching and students' progress, measured against the standards expected in the National Curriculum.
263. Improvements since the last inspection include the introduction of GNVQ manufacturing, assessment procedures, including tracking and short-term targets, new schemes of work at Key Stage 3, introduction of CAD/CAM in students' work and a general improvement in examination performance.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm of teachers stimulates students' interest.
- Schemes of work are detailed and well written, providing good coverage of syllabus requirements.
- Very good leadership and management result in challenging targets and comprehensive documentation that provides clear guidance for teachers.
- Strategies for improving students' literacy are good, resulting in improved written work.
- Detailed tracking and analysis of progress contribute to rising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Refinement of the detailed resource booklets to match the needs of the least and most competent students.
- Provision of more opportunities in Years 7 to 9 for students to develop their computer skills.

264. Standards of work seen during the inspection are, on average, below those that students are expected to reach nationally at ages 14 and 16. A significant minority reach or exceed that standard. This represents good progress since students entered the college, when available indicators show that most were performing well below national expectations. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Their teachers know them well, and on the rare occasions they are available, learning support assistants give valuable support and guidance. Those students who attend regularly make good progress because they gain much from the improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
265. Statutory teacher assessments at age 14 have been below the national expectation in recent years, with girls outperforming boys by a wider margin than the national gender difference. GCSE results have been below the national average in recent years, although they show a gradual upward trend since the previous inspection. They declined slightly between 2000 and 2001. The department's inclusive policy of entering all students, including the least competent, for the examination, results in a large proportion of grades in the range D-G. In 2001, this resulted in geography grades being relatively weaker than in several subjects, although in most years, the students' relative performance in the subject is good. There has been no consistent pattern of boys' or girls' superiority in these results in recent years.
266. At age 14, standards are below national expectations. The small minority of more competent students do better than this. All students have at least satisfactory map reading skills. The most competent have, for example, a good understanding of how earthquakes happen. The least competent have difficulty in expressing ideas in writing, but can describe earthquakes orally. The analysis of students' work reveals a gradual improvement in the application of skills such as the graphical representation of data and the compilation of annotated maps and diagrams. In general, weak literacy skills hamper the progress of about one third of the students.
267. Standards at age 16 remain below the national expectation. The minority of more competent students are working at a higher standard. The most competent students extract relevant information from a range of sources to make clear notes. They have, for example, a good understanding of the effectiveness of low technology solutions to problems in developing countries. In their coursework, they set up hypotheses and test them by using simple statistical techniques to analyse their fieldwork data. Less competent students record their results using simple graphs, but are unsure in the analysis of their findings. It is noticeable in most lessons that students have good short-term recall of earlier learning, but only the most competent have good longer-term recall. As in Years 7 to 9, lower attaining students are taxed by any requirement to write at length. There is no obvious difference in the observed attainment of boys and girls in any year group.
268. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is frequently very good and never unsatisfactory. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, enthusiasm for the subject and sensible allocation of time to different activities. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and classroom management skills. Students' response to this good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. They behave well and stay on task.

269. Very good teaching was seen in a Year 9 lesson on earthquakes. The teacher adjusted the lesson plan to cater for students who had been absent for the previous lesson without detriment to the learning of others. By the end of that lesson, all students had made good progress towards the completion of a written report on the Kobe earthquake. They were assisted by the orderly atmosphere in the room and the helpful guidance they received in the use of reference material.
270. In all lessons, teachers help the development of students' literacy with the use of writing frames and emphasis on sentence and paragraph structure. As a result, many less competent students are beginning to produce good, extended passages of writing in their coursework. All lessons start with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, enabling students to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. Teachers' skilful questioning ensures that all students are actively involved in lessons. In a small number of comparatively less successful lessons, there is insufficient matching of tasks to individual students' capability.
271. The otherwise excellent college-produced source materials sometimes use language too difficult for the least competent students to understand, and provide insufficient challenge for the most competent. In some lessons, unsatisfactory time management results in some students being left insufficient time to complete tasks. Homework is set regularly, providing reinforcement to classroom learning. Work is marked regularly and for the most part, marking is accompanied by helpful comments.
272. Management and leadership of the department are very good. As a result there has been good improvement since the last inspection; learning is better and standards are rising. Very good leadership results in challenging targets and a well-defined strategy for planned improvement. Very good management results in detailed schemes of work, a comprehensive handbook and very good displays of work within classrooms. The very good guidance provides a very effective foundation to provide a consistent quality of teaching and learning. Displayed work illustrates to the students the high expectations of their teachers and the standards to which they should strive. The consequences of a long-term staffing absence have been very skilfully managed. Geography remains a popular choice for students at age 14.
273. Some priorities for further improvement remain. The management of assessment is satisfactory. Analysis and tracking of students' progress are much improved since the previous inspection. This remains less thorough in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Currently, opportunities for students to improve their computer skills in geography are limited.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good subject knowledge of teachers.
- Good strategies to promote students' literacy skills.
- Good ongoing review of the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Development of assessment practice so that students know how to improve their work.

274. Standards at age 14 and at age 16 are below those that students are expected to reach nationally. This reflects the low standards of students on entry to the college at age 11. It

also indicates satisfactory progress at age 14. By then, the minority of more competent students are producing work that is broadly in line with the standards expected nationally.

275. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average but the proportion obtaining at least a grade C more than doubled from the previous year. Just over one quarter of those choosing to study the subject beyond the age of 14 obtained grades A*-C in 2001. Nationally, nearly two-thirds of candidates did so. Standards of work are rising because a larger number of more competent students are choosing to study history and they are very well supported through additionally planned revision activities.
276. Achievement is satisfactory at age 14 and good at age 16. Students at age 14 analyse the military position of the two alliance systems at the outbreak of World War One by comparing the size of their populations, armies and warships. They distinguish between short- and long-term causes of the war. Progress is good. As a result, one year later they understand the main differences in attitudes to land and gold held by European settlers and the North American Indians in the 19th century. At age 16, the more competent students demonstrate good memory skills as they recall from much earlier study the main features of European settlement of the American Plains. Students with special educational needs make good progress across all years.
277. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It gets better as the students get older; satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, good overall in Years 10 and 11 and very good in the sixth form. All teachers have good subject knowledge and their good planning of lessons, together with regular recap of prior learning, helps students to consolidate their understanding, as seen in Year 7 lessons on The Black Death and Year 9 lessons on World War One.
278. Students learn well because their behaviour is managed well. Consequently, levels of concentration are invariably very good. High expectations and a non-confrontational approach gain the attention and sustain the interest very well of those students with educational and behavioural difficulties.
279. Many students learn well because the skills of reading and writing are well taught. Printed resources are prepared carefully. As a result, many make good gains in historical vocabulary and extend their range of knowledge. They are well guided through tasks in lessons and the printed materials provide the basis for worthwhile homework. Particularly good examples were seen in work on the causes of The Black Death and a revision sheet on the American West. Chronology is well taught as students are often referred to the time-lines which are on all classroom walls and many tasks reinforce sequencing skills, for example a card sort exercise on the causes of World War One.
280. There are fewer than usual opportunities for students to write and speak at length. This restricts the depth of their understanding, enquiries and explanations. It is an important reason why students do not reach the nationally expected standards, despite good progress in other aspects of their work.
281. There are good opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills, for example with charts showing the timing of the day of a medieval monk, population change from 1750 to 1900 and death rates before and after the introduction of antiseptics. The attitude of all students seen was good and they persevere well with tasks set and usually listen attentively. Teaching does not actively promote independent learning skills or responsibility to contribute to the learning of others, for example through regular group work.

282. Leadership and management are both good. The good leadership expects that all do their very best. The response is good. A very good feature is the unusually high level of respect developed in all students for the care and presentation of their exercise books and files. Classrooms are orderly and well maintained. The management of the curriculum for students between the ages of 11 and 14 is good. It is reviewed regularly to ensure that it stimulates students' interest, well illustrated in the introduction of a local study in Year 9 that makes a good contribution to the students' cultural development.
283. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. Standards are rising because many aspects of provision are well managed. There were two areas of development identified in the last report and these have been addressed well. There are new and well-designed evidence and task sheets and the range of resources is good, for example with new texts for GCSE, video film and ICT software.
284. Some challenging areas for further improvement remain. For example, the contribution to personal development, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is not clearly defined in the otherwise good schemes of work. The good planning and provision of software for ICT is frustrated by limited opportunities to use computers. The most important area for further improvement is the leadership and management of assessment so that students are more fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their learning and have specific targets for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students make good progress because the good subject knowledge of their teachers helps them to make good use of computers.
- Students work hard in lessons because relationships are very good.
- Students are interested in the subject and they behave well in lessons.
- The strong leadership of the department, with well-planned courses and good deployment of teachers and accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7, 8 and 9 to set targets for improvement.
- The consistent quality of teaching.
- The continuity of the curriculum from 14 to 19 years.
- The planning and management of the use of ICT in other subjects.

285. Results in the national tests at age 14 and in the GCSE short course at age 16 were both below average in 2001.
286. Standards at ages 14 and 16 are higher than those results. They are currently in line with those expected nationally at these ages.
287. At age 14, most students produce well laid out business letters, making good use of their wordprocessing skills. They use spreadsheets, create graphs and know how to use Internet search engines. At age 16, they apply these skills in a range of projects, learning how to use wizards for supplier forms in database work and gaining a good understanding of different types of fields such as numeric, text and currency. The minority of more competent students plan and draft their coursework, obtaining the

higher grades as a result. The majority of less competent students produce less work and their evaluations are much briefer.

288. In all lessons seen, students made good progress and achieved well as they consolidated and applied previously acquired skills and learned new ones. The more competent students make very good progress in Years 7 and 8 because they respond very well to their teachers' good planning of lessons and high expectations. Poor attendance adversely affects the progress of a significant number of students over time.
289. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Sometimes they are very good and occasionally excellent. On such occasions, teachers use their very good and sometimes excellent subject knowledge to give clear explanations and pose challenging questions. Work is well matched to the needs of the students and expectations are high. Consequently, the students make good gains in understanding and are well motivated. As a result, the two top sets in Year 9 are well ahead and already following a GNVQ course. In the good or better lessons, the well-managed setting of targets helps students understand what is expected. The very best lessons combine these features with excellent pace and challenge.
290. Where teaching is only satisfactory, little use is made of National Curriculum levels in Years 7, 8 and 9 to help students set their own targets for improvement.
291. Leadership and management are very good. The strategy to raise standards through the provision of very well taught courses that match the needs, interests and competencies of the students is well planned. The high commitment to very good provision is well evidenced in the many well-managed additional opportunities for students to study at lunchtimes, beyond the school day and on Saturdays. The deployment of technicians is very good, involving not only the maintenance of the network but very good additional support in lessons. The managed continuity of the curriculum from 14 to 19 years is currently unsatisfactory.
292. As a result, there has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the range of courses and in the quality of teaching.

ICT in other subjects of the curriculum

293. The additional funding and planning objectives linked to the college's specialist status has resulted in very good provision in science, mathematics and design and technology. This reflects well the priorities of the strategic improvement plan. There is a good level of expertise as a result of New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training. The ratio of computers to students is very good but supply does not match the ever increasing demand. Consequently in several subjects, for example history, English and modern foreign languages, the availability of hardware is insufficient to meet fully the requirements of the revised National Curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and management of classes are very good, so most students learn well.
- GCSE results in both languages have risen since the last inspection.
- Higher than average GCSE results in German have been maintained.
- The department is very well managed, has excellent team spirit and welcomes opportunities for professional development.
- The very good assessment of students' attainment gives them a clear view of their progress and potential.

Areas for improvement

- Only a minority of students study a language for GCSE or A-level.
- More opportunities to use ICT.
- Students' skills in speaking expressively or at any length from memory.

294. Statutory teacher assessments at age 14 were below average but higher than previously.

295. In 2001, the proportion gaining the higher GCSE grades A*-C in French, from a small entry at age 16, was broadly in line with the national average but the proportion obtaining grades A*-G was lower. These results were also higher than in the previous year. The girls attained higher results than the boys. Both groups performed better than they did in most of their other subjects.

296. The proportion of students gaining A*-C in German in 2001 was also higher than in the previous year, and remained above the national average. All students entering were successful, with no grade lower than F. Boys and girls attained results in German much higher than those they achieved in other subjects.

297. Standards at age 14 are close to those expected nationally, due to a steady improvement in teaching methods and more accurate assessment. Most students arrive in Year 7 with little or no knowledge of European languages, and their achievements in French and German are good. They soon follow lessons conducted in French, understand simple tape recordings and read short, familiar captions and statements. From learning to exchange everyday greetings and classroom requests, most students, including those with special educational needs, progress in Years 7 and 8 to conversing briefly about themselves, people they know and aspects of daily life.

298. More competent students also study German in Years 8 and 9. The small minority who speak English as an additional language are well included in both languages and learn fast. By the end of Year 9, students use different tenses and structures to refer to the past and the future. They adapt their writing to produce posters, informal letters and dialogues about buying clothes and booking accommodation. Students use number frequently and usually accurately for time, dates and in surveys of pets or leisure pursuits.

299. In Years 10 and 11, a minority of students opt to study French or German for the GCSE. Most are well motivated to do their best, attaining standards broadly in line with national expectations. Less competent students, including some with special educational needs, reinforce the language they have learnt earlier, acquiring the basic skills of talking and

writing about themselves and situations they might encounter abroad. In mixed-ability classes, they make sound gains in vocabulary and grammar knowledge by working alongside more competent students.

300. Most students develop good listening skills, especially when teachers speak French and German continuously. The most competent linguists speak confidently, are curious about new language and keen to interpret unfamiliar texts. Students of all abilities are creative in making tourist brochures, some using computers to research and present information. At age 16, most talk and write at some length about past holidays or experiences on French and German exchanges. Some express themselves only briefly with written prompts or limited accuracy. The progress of a minority in French is affected by irregular, and in some cases infrequent, attendance. A minority of the less competent finds the work hard, lacks perseverance and produces little.
301. The quality of teaching and learning in French and German is good because most students' attitudes to learning languages are good and their teachers are fluent in French and German, usually presenting their students with a lively, authentic model of language to copy. Occasionally they use English more than they need to, so that students' listening is less well developed. Their knowledge of National Curriculum and examination requirements is very good.
302. There are several very good features that impact strongly on the quality of students' learning. Good planning lets students use a range of skills, building well on previous learning. Expectations are frequently high, even when classes contain many students with special educational needs.
303. Consequently, most lessons have a busy, productive atmosphere, especially where there are short dialogues, paired work or games providing a frequent change of focus. In many classes, teachers encourage co-operative work, often making worksheets and materials that students use in preparing conversations and discussions about ideal holidays or healthy living. They make good and often imaginative use of conventional audio-visual resources to recreate situations such as visiting a zoo or ordering a snack.
304. Most students appreciate the chance to use French and German for real purposes such as singing a song, winning a competition or describing their city. Less competent learners appreciate the firm structure and management of lessons adapted to their needs. Consequently, they gain in confidence and increase their length of concentration.
305. Many students enjoy watching others perform. Both the boys and the girls willingly join in the presentation of lessons. Occasionally, when teachers' presentations are lengthy or not matched to the spread of ability, a minority find it hard to concentrate, or get bored and lose interest. Where possible, teachers encourage students of all ages to research and produce lengthier projects using computers at home or in college.
306. Teachers have good personal knowledge of their students' abilities and potential achievement, derived from short tests, regular and supportive marking and eliciting oral responses in class. Their assessment of students preparing for external examinations, including those with special educational needs, is thorough and accurate. Teachers make satisfactory use of homework to extend and prepare the work done in class. Many well-organised, attractive folders and wall displays reflect students' pride in finished work, although a few produce untidy or incomplete pieces.
307. Leadership and management are both very good. Consequently, excellent teamwork gains much from the shared monitoring of quality through direct observation of teaching.

The team is well supported by their line manager and others in the senior management team. Responsibilities are shared equitably and all members of the department contribute well. The provision of courses is satisfactory up to age 14 but too limited by the system of options thereafter. The opportunities for older students to meet native speakers abroad or benefit from residential courses are good.

308. As a result, there has been good improvement in provision and performance since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and assessment procedures.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- An enriching programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Good quality of and provision for instrumental teaching.
- Good provision to support and develop students' personal, social and cultural development through public performance.
- **Areas for improvement**
- Standards and achievement at age 14 in lessons.
- The matching of tasks and activities to the competencies of different groups of students.
- Monitoring and assessment procedures.

309. Most students enter the college with very low skills in making and responding to music. They make unsatisfactory progress overall and none chooses currently to study music after the age of 14.

310. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities, instrumental provision and other musical events are good. They provide a very good range of opportunities for a minority of students and indicate a good degree of commitment to students' personal development. Consequently, their musical awareness is much enriched. These students make good progress in performance skills as a result.

311. Opportunities are taken to invite professional musicians into the college. More students than at the time of the previous inspection are benefiting from the instrumental provision, which is well planned and organised. The teaching of these lessons is very good and the students concerned achieve high standards. There is a strong sense of pride and commitment shown by those who attend the ensembles. The string ensemble rehearsed pieces reflecting their local heritage with enthusiasm. The opportunity to perform in public promotes confidence and contributes well to these students' personal, social and cultural development.

312. There is a very marked contrast between this provision for some students through additional learning opportunities, particularly to learn an instrument, and that for all students in lessons. Consequently, at the age of 14, standards overall are well below those expected nationally. The statutory teacher assessments in 2001 at age 14 were higher, recording standards below expectations. These were over-generous. The work seen in lessons and students' notebooks indicates that the standards of the boys and the girls are broadly similar.

313. Most students do not develop and practice musical skills regularly in lessons and there is a lack of opportunity for them to review music critically and evaluate their work in

progress. They generally lack confidence when creating music and performing. Few use classroom percussion instruments correctly or know their names.

314. Attitudes improve over the first two years at the college but at age 14, the immaturity of some and the lack of appropriate tasks and activities for many, result in standards well below those expected nationally.
315. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Sometimes, in lessons seen, they made good progress. Occasionally, they do not get involved in the lesson because the activities are too hard for them to complete.
316. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall in the timetabled lessons for all students seen during the inspection. The commitment to develop the skills of the minority of instrumentalists is good. Questioning is good when it is targeted and then supplemented to develop students' answers. This was shown to good effect in a Year 8 lesson when students were encouraged to recall the name of a piece by Bizet that they had listened to the previous week. There are carefully established routines in practical work but the accommodation is not always used well.
317. Some aspects of lesson planning, particularly the match of tasks to the full range of students' competencies, the development of literacy skills and the monitoring of students' work, are unsatisfactory. Occasionally, learning is unsatisfactory because students work in close proximity to each other and the high noise levels mean that many cannot hear their own work. Consequently, they find it difficult to evaluate their practical skills.
318. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Current strengths include the good administration and organisation of arrangements for instrumental tuition. There are good links with instrumental teachers who support and direct several of the ensembles. Despite these good features, there is a lack of educational direction and the monitoring of standards and quality is unsatisfactory overall.
319. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Despite the increase in the extra-curricular provision, standards overall have not improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching assists students to achieve well in practical activities.
- Standards in dance are good.
- The good working relationships in lessons.
- Very good extra-curricular provision contributes to rising standards in practical work.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate for the number of students.
- The standards of written work in the GCSE course.

320. By the end of Year 9, standards are satisfactory. Occasionally skill levels are very good. Year 9 boys play table tennis to a high standard and execute advanced techniques. They consistently impart topspin and slice to the ball and play good, long rallies. In

trampolining, some students, principally boys, perform various front and back somersaults. Standards in dance are good. In gymnastics they are satisfactory.

321. Teaching is sufficiently varied to allow students to plan and evaluate their work in these activities. In health-related exercise, many girls in Years 8 and 9 understand the basic functions of the cardio-vascular system and are able to discuss them when questioned.
322. A minority of students take the GCSE course. Results in 2001 were well below average but compared favourably with the students' performance in their other subjects. One third obtained a grade C or better compared with one half of the candidates nationally.
323. The standard of practical work is often good and, occasionally, excellent. In badminton, many Year 11 boys have excellent skills that they apply confidently in games. These racket skills include advanced forehand and backhand strokes that are consistently and accurately played to all areas of the court. A significant minority of boys have very good trampoline skills. They perform a range of forward and backward somersaulting skills, some even involving twists. Girls, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, show excellent progress in creative dance and are producing a good standard of practical work for GCSE.
324. In the sixth form, only small numbers of students have taken A-level to date. Organisational skills within written work are unsatisfactory. In practical activities, boys perform to a good standard in badminton.
325. At all ages, students with special educational needs and English as an additional language are very well included in lessons. Many perform very well and make good progress.
326. Many students take advantage of the very good range of extra-curricular activities. A considerable number of boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, regularly participate during lunchtimes and after college. Some students represent the college and the city in teams.
327. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Occasionally, it is very good or excellent. In the excellent teaching, lesson planning is meticulous and detailed. Precise learning objectives are shared with classes, and students clearly understand what they are aiming to achieve and what is expected of them. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and demonstrate skills very effectively. In the best lessons, teaching styles are regularly changed to meet different objectives.
328. Only occasionally is teaching too dominated by teachers and this results in unimaginative work. Good working relationships exist; students respond with interest and enthusiasm. These relationships positively influence attitudes and behaviour. Very few students sit out of lessons without valid excuses. Students of all ages enjoy the subject and make sustained efforts to improve. There is very good co-operation between students which ensures that practices and games proceed well.
329. Leadership and management are good. Regular meetings result in consistent expectations, the sharing of good practice, the good implementation of policy and good teamwork. Many aspects of documentation are good, although some policies need further development. Very good displays celebrate students' achievements as well as providing information about the provision. Resources are well managed. Provision of books in the library is good but there are too few reference books and no CD-Roms for examination courses.

330. Some aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory and affect standards adversely. Two good indoor facilities include a well-equipped gymnasium and a large sports hall but these alone are insufficient in this large college. Lighting within the sports hall is poor. Some dance lessons are taught in an old hall with unsuitable unsprung flooring, that could result in damage to students' hip, knee and ankle joints, and unsatisfactory changing facilities. Students even have to change in this hall before lessons. The playing fields remain inadequate.
331. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is now more flexible, allowing students to be creative. Time allocation for the subject is now satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching for students in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well prepared and involve oral activities enabling students to rehearse ideas before progressing to written tasks.
- Curriculum provision for Years 9 to 11 that enables all students to follow a GCSE short course.
- The contribution the subject makes to students' personal, moral, social and cultural development because lessons always feature opportunities to discuss these aspects.

Areas for improvement

- Subject provision in the sixth form.
- Consistent assessment procedures to enable precise target setting.
- Opportunities to use ICT so that students research information more widely.
- Opportunities for students to work things out for themselves.

332. Standards at ages 14 and 16 are below expectations but improving.
333. Achievement is satisfactory at the age of 14 and good at age 16. This is because most respond to the high expectations of their teachers. Behaviour is well managed. Consequently, distractions and delays are rare. Interest is maintained because the subject matter is well planned to match the different levels of competence. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, less competent students sorted information associated with the practices of Chinese New Year using cards with illustrations and prose appropriate for their age and their reading ability. Achievement is good at the age of 16 because of the additional motivation of following a GCSE short course.
334. The quality of learning is sometimes restricted, remaining only satisfactory, because opportunities to use ICT for research are limited. Consequently, many students have too few opportunities to find things out for themselves. Sometimes, learning remains satisfactory because the more competent are insufficiently challenged. This happens when there are few opportunities to show response, evaluation and the application of what they have learned from their study of religion.
335. Students with special educational needs make good progress because good planning matches their needs well. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students because issues concerning the purpose of life, contemporary issues and influence of beliefs on life styles are included in all

lessons. Students appreciate the relevance of the curriculum which raises complex issues and they learn to appreciate the diverse views held on these matters.

336. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It gets better as the students get older due to the challenge of the examination course. Teaching is satisfactory for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is good in Years 10 and 11. In a Year 9 lesson on moral and natural evil, where the teacher's expectations were high and active teaching methods were used, students made good gains in knowledge and understanding. In addition, they improved their personal skills of working together and learned to accept the differing views of others.
337. Leadership and management are good. The department is under new leadership that has defined well the improvement plan and strategy, monitors teaching well, is supportive and promotes good teamwork. Some aspects of the procedures for assessment and target setting are unsatisfactory.
338. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

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

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Geography	1	100	74	-	6	2.00	1.18
Other sciences	1	-	78	-	27	-	2.27

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	6	17	88	0	34	0.67	5.25
Business studies	5	60	92	0	32	1.60	5.50
Chemistry	4	50	90	0	43	2.00	5.90
Computer studies	3	67	86	0	23	2.00	4.62
English literature	5	40	95	0	37	1.20	5.91
Geography	2	100	92	50	38	7.00	5.74
Mathematics	8	50	87	0	43	1.50	5.80
Other sciences	3	67	90	0	30	2.67	5.16
Sports/PE studies	6	100	92	0	25	3.33	5.09

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2					18.00	12.24
Business	6	50				11.00	10.45
Health and social care	3			33		4.00	10.79
Leisure and tourism	3					12.00	10.06

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, chemistry and psychology were inspected in detail. Work in biology and physics was also sampled.

The inspection covered advanced (A) and advanced supplementary (AS) levels. Further mathematics, key skills and GCSE re-sit courses were sampled. All courses were well taught and teachers showed sensitivity to the learning needs of students. The number of students is very small in further mathematics and the success rate is low. The key skills lessons provide good support for students working towards their Level 1 standard. Students following the GCSE re-sit course are successful in improving their grades and the number of students reduces as they attain levels suited to their needs.

Mathematics

The quality of provision for mathematics in the sixth form is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Strong relationships encourage students' learning.
- Highly motivated teachers, intent on raising achievement and attainment of students.

Areas for improvement

- Results at A-level.
- Teaching styles that encourage students' independent learning.

339. Results at A-level in 2001 were well below the national average. The small number of candidates renders national comparisons and trend analysis unreliable. Achievement was satisfactory but students did less well than in their other subjects.

340. Year 12 AS-level results in 2001 were satisfactory. Achievement was good. Half exceeded their target grade based on prior results at GCSE. Most successful students continued on to the A-level course.

341. Standards at AS- and A2-levels are satisfactory. Achievement is good. Year 13 students are learning well and are progressing through their course at a challenging pace. Their files show ability to use methods of differentiation, curve sketching, significance testing using the normal distribution and other elements of their programmes of study.

342. The most competent students show good understanding and provide fluent mathematical solutions. Less competent students rely on the strict methodology delivered by the teacher. In a Year 13 lesson on the differentiation of parametric equations, students made rapid progress in their ability to find solutions but lacked an understanding of the background concepts.

343. Year 12 students are learning well. Their files show detailed coverage of topics for their AS-level modules; networks, differentiation and integration methods, showing good progress through their programmes of study. Their work indicates good attitudes to the subject and the development of good mathematical practices. The most competent students' files indicate good understanding, with many minor stages omitted from their working. As in Year 13, the less competent students rely on given formats for their solutions. In a Year 12 lesson, using Prim's algorithm, competent students were able to

move rapidly to matrix solutions that involved timed routes, while others followed closely the routine described by the teacher. There are some basic weaknesses in number skills that impair accuracy. The very good relationships which exist in teaching groups provide a supportive environment for students to learn.

344. All groups of students are equally involved in lessons and make progress in line with their ability. This was observed in a Year 12 lesson in which the teacher ensured that students from differing backgrounds and with varied mathematical competence understood the processes of solution, enabling them to succeed.
345. The teaching of A-level mathematics is good. The high quality of teachers' subject knowledge ensures good mathematical processes are engendered in students and that lessons are well planned. Very good student-teacher relationships within the classroom provide a trusting learning environment in which students feel comfortable seeking help.
346. The predominant teaching style, experienced by students, is that of teacher-led lessons, which are designed to move students rapidly through the course. Whilst this gives security to the less competent learners, it restricts the development of students' analytical skills.
347. Teachers use ICT well and are developing their facility to use classroom computers linked to projectors that are becoming integral tools within the department. One of the most striking features is teachers' enthusiasm for their subject which communicates itself to students and helps maintain a brisk rate of work. Marking of students' work is thorough with helpful comments.
348. Leadership and management are good. Responding to recent changes in the department, all teachers have co-ordinated their responsibilities to develop effective sixth-form provision. There is an ethos within the department of striving for best performance from students, which is demonstrated by the selfless support that teachers give to students. Extra-curricular revision classes are on offer and students have access to staff at all times for support. Well-qualified and skilled teachers teach the sixth form. Since the last inspection, resources have improved and the provision of suitable course texts has enhanced students' facilities for learning. The new AS-level course has been introduced and examination modules chosen to offer best opportunities for success. The department must strive to improve results at A-level and develop teaching styles that encourage more insightful, independent learning by students.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students' attitudes towards learning are excellent.
- The course matches fully the students' aspirations and potential.

Areas for improvement

- Learning is not supported by a structured course of teaching key skills.
- Aspects of learning the subject through social interaction with peers are not possible.

349. The four students taking GCE A-level chemistry in 2001 obtained grades A-E. One student obtained a higher grade A. Comparisons with national averages are not possible

because of the small number of students taking the A-level examination. No candidates took the A-level examination in 1998 and 2000. Of the nine students taking the A-level examinations in 1999 and 2001, seven obtained the full range of grades (A-E). Two students reached the higher grades (A-B). Overall, girls performed better than the boys. Students' performance since 1998 in A-level chemistry has been better than in biology. Comparisons with A-level physics are not possible due to the low number of students taking the examination.

350. Students taking AS-level examinations in 2001 performed badly. Of the five students embarking upon the course in 2000, two dropped out early in the course to take opportunities for employment whilst two other students obtained low grades and exercised the option not to study the subject further. The remaining student has continued to follow the A-level course. The decline in student numbers appears to be because students with grades as low as C at GCSE level in science were accepted on to the AS course and most found the work too demanding. Students taking AS-level biology and physics performed better than those taking AS-level chemistry and this means that groups taking these subjects to A-level are larger.
351. The student's achievement is about that expected nationally. Following the initial sixth-form year, an adjustment to the rigours of advanced study took place and progress was satisfactory; the student's progress now is good. This is because there is personal tuition, attitudes to learning are excellent and there is a clear focus on obtaining appropriate A-level grades required to embark upon a higher education course at university. Effective learning results from the very good teaching and the individual attention given by two well-qualified teachers. The learning is supported by the motivation, application and diligence in most aspects of the student's work. The organisation of notes, the presentation of written work and lack of a systematically taught course in key skills provide less support for more effective learning. The scope for increasing the modes of learning is reduced by the nature of the teacher-student grouping. There are no opportunities to extend learning by giving and receiving help from other students, listening to other students presenting work, contributing to class discussions and working in pairs during practical investigations. However, within these limitations, progress in learning continues. In an excellent lesson to consider the application of different forms of heat changes in a chemical reaction, the teacher and student engaged in a high level discussion of the theoretical considerations. The student's answers to the teacher's wide range of demanding questions showed a very good understanding of the principles of the Born-Haber cycle. The student's questions stimulated the teacher's thinking and the outcomes contributed to the effectiveness of the learning.
352. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. There are significant strengths in the teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills. The teachers' lessons are planned very well and expectations of themselves and the student are high. Time and resources are used very well and assessment is used effectively to monitor progress and plan lessons. The teachers know the student's strengths and areas of uncertainty and adjust the teaching accordingly. Lessons move at a very good pace and match closely the student's capability to assimilate the content. Practical skills are very well taught and promote an interest in carrying out investigatory work. In a lesson to investigate the formation of copper complexes, the teacher allowed discoveries to be made and explanations to be given before discussing each reaction. The quality of the teaching is a strong feature in the progress the student is making.
353. There is good leadership and management of the subject. The teaching benefits from well-planned coursework and very good accommodation and resources for learning.

Monitoring of performance through end of unit tests and target setting are used successfully to promote effective learning. The numbers of students following the subject remains very low as at the time of the previous inspection. The decision to replace GCSE courses in science with GNVQ courses in Year 10 has implications for the future of the subject at post-16 level and these, as yet, have not been fully addressed.

BUSINESS

The main focus was on business studies. No other subject is provided in this area of the curriculum.

Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Test/examination results for vocational and GCSE courses.
- Case studies used to enhance evaluation skills.
- Internet research.
- Access to a wide range of resource material.
- Learning and study skills.
- Interactive feedback with students.
- Quality of teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Key words dictionary.
- Attendance.
- Completion of homework assignments.
- Differentiated learning materials.
- Numeracy skills.
- Punctuality/submission of work.
- Language skills in writing and oral work.

354. Standards of work seen in business studies are above those usually seen nationally. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' knowledge of business and economics causes the quality of their learning to be good. Schemes of work provide a range of learning experiences which allows students to consolidate previous learning and progress further in the subject. As a result, students' achievements overall, in relation to their standards when they began in Year 10 and in the sixth form, are good.

355. Standards in Year 12 are above average for vocational courses and average for AS-level courses. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business enterprise in relation to current business theory and practice. The majority of students, but particularly the most competent, make effective use of relevant business terminology, concepts and computing methods to select up-to-date data. Students are aware of the overall scope of their programme of practical work and field studies. The more competent students appreciate the views of different stakeholders in relation to business and economic trends. These students are fully aware of the significance of inflation and recessionary trends. Good writing and debates and arguments were observed on the ownership and control of business, the management of people in business and the several functional areas of marketing, finance and production. Students are gaining an understanding of the moral, ethical and social cultural issues

that influence modern economic activities such as equal pay, unfair dismissal and discrimination on grounds of disability. Case study work is used to develop communication and computing skills. Students can undertake research both individually and in groups. Students work hard on building up their knowledge of organisational structures. Coursework assignments encourage key skills development. The teachers' notes and other printed materials are generally well matched to the needs of the students.

356. Standards in Year 13 are above average for vocational courses and average for A-level courses. Students have a good awareness of business theory and practice in their everyday life. They are familiar with the different sectors of the United Kingdom and European economy. Students know and can talk about the variety of businesses within each sector, as for example the size of a multinational company such as the Ford Motor Company. The more competent students quickly see the value of a case study approach to business studies as it develops their ability to seek and verify evidence.
357. Most students, particularly those on vocational courses, understand and can see the value of electronic data sources to gather current information. Students spend at least two or three hours per week researching up-to-date information on economic trends, searching for growth or decline indices. A majority of students focus on relevant theories and concepts related to the United Kingdom's position within the European Union.
358. All students can use case studies, stimulus materials, textbooks and well-prepared teacher notes to enhance their writing. Students are encouraged to organise their time and develop their study skills.
359. Self-motivation and discipline are good even amongst the less competent students. However, punctuality and regular attendance are unsatisfactory. A minority is just getting by with a minimum of effort in both areas. Clear, constructive teacher guidance on the required amount of effort needed to succeed supports most students well.
360. Examination results for GCSE courses and for vocational courses at the end of Year 13 are good. Overall, the average points score for all students taking AS/A2-level and advanced GNVQ has risen significantly. Across all vocational courses, an above average award rate has been achieved in 2000, 2001 and a similar performance is predicted for 2002. AS/A2-level results are satisfactory for the college but below the national average. Overall, girls have outperformed boys but not significantly so. The highest awards have been achieved by a number of students predicted to achieve lower grades. There has been value added in the awards, over time, at the end of Year 13. Awards are good when compared to the attainment levels noted for these groups of students at the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 11. High expectations are communicated to all students.
361. The quality of teaching is good for GCSE and post-16 courses. The teachers provide a suitable learning environment, present business knowledge clearly and act as a resource to the students. Teachers give ideas for areas for investigation to students but leave them to work as individuals. Teaching approaches are suitably varied and challenging. The development of key skills is planned into lessons. Teachers give help with the presentation of results and guide students in their use of electronic sources, where appropriate. Learning comes both as a result of investigating business in the

classroom and in its true environment by visiting local firms and work experience. Equally important are the economic theory inputs from knowledgeable teachers. Students with exceptional ability are able to demonstrate their talents by using their initiative and enterprise in their research work. Much of their writing has depth. Those students with learning difficulties find teachers supportive and their assistance provided necessary. The different levels of task are well matched to the needs of the individual. Learning is monitored and teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss teaching strategies and students' progress. Changes are made to methods as and when necessary. Schemes of work ensure that students have a broad range of experiences in business studies.

362. Leadership and management are good. The teacher in charge monitors all policies. A variety of strategies are used to monitor the quality of learning in the classroom. These include informal classroom observation, sampling student work and moderation of assignments. Teachers are aware of the frequent developments taking place in business education. Planning is seen as essential and it is effective. High expectations are communicated to all students. Meetings take place on a regular basis, both after college in the formal setting of a departmental/subject meeting, and informally, during the day, as a part of a training exercise. The head accepts full responsibility for the subject's progress and for changes of course content/delivery taking place. These arrangements are effective in promoting higher standards. For example, teachers exchange materials and ideas on a regular basis, which encourages the development of business education. A management goal is to improve and upgrade the range and quality of resources whenever possible, particularly the amount of accommodation available. At present, student access to suitable materials is good and it is developing all the time. All staff contribute to this development.

363. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Students are now more actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of business and economic resources including Internet access. A great deal of time is spent helping students prepare for examinations. While the vocational courses are achieving above average results, as are the GCSE, the AS/A2-level results are below average. Additional learning experiences are obtained via visits to local firms and research work. Where appropriate the cross-curricular themes of careers, equal opportunities and citizenship are followed. The nature for business studies lends itself to the development of a number of issues related to the above themes and teachers' delivery takes account of this.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The main focus was on computer studies. No other subject is provided in this area of the curriculum.

Computer studies

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

Strengths

- The teachers' good subject knowledge.
- The relationships between teachers and students.
- The positive attitudes of students about the courses.

Areas for improvement

- The take up of the AS-level course.
- The range of courses available in the sixth form.

364. Results in A-level computer studies in 2001 were below average. Because only three students took the course, such comparisons should be treated with great caution. No students took AS-level computer studies in 2001.
365. Standards currently are below expected levels for AS-level students in Year 12. None has previously studied ICT at GCSE level. No student takes the A2-level course in Year 13.
366. Standards in Year 12 are below those usually found nationally because students' knowledge of databases is narrow and their understanding of operating systems incomplete. Skills in wordprocessing, spreadsheets, databases and the use of e-mail are satisfactory. Most use computers satisfactorily, have a satisfactory understanding of basic programming and all have completed successfully short computer programmes, using a basic language, on topics such as bar code recognition, a geography quiz, sales projections and mobile phone call costs.
367. Achievement is satisfactory. Most use computers and software confidently. Despite no previous experience, progress is good in writing short programs in a basic language.
368. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good features include good subject knowledge and good expectations that result in students making good gains in understanding and working hard. Good assessment procedures include precise marking that informs students well about the quality of their work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subject was inspected in detail but several lessons in leisure and tourism (GNVQ) and travel and tourism (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) were sampled. In leisure and tourism, examination results in 2001 were above average. This is the first year of the AVCE course, so there are no examination results. Teaching was at least good, and was very good in two out of three lessons. In one AVCE lesson, very good teaching successfully developed students' communication skills to a point where they felt sufficiently confident to give presentations of their research findings to their classmates.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

There is only one subject in this area of the curriculum.

Health and social care

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.
- Very good teaching and excellent subject expertise provide a range of activities in which students of all abilities can succeed.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- The very good leadership results in well-planned courses.
- Very good assessment arrangements inform students regularly how well they are doing.

Areas for improvement

- The large number of teachers in the department.
- The shared teaching of one intermediate unit of work.
- The lack of provision of the foundation course this year.

369. Standards in health and social care are average and students' achievement is good. In 2001, three students were registered for the advanced GNVQ course. One attained a merit and two students gained unit accreditation. In the AVCE six unit award, one student gained unit accreditation, one student an E grade and two, who are presently continuing with a further six units at the school, attained D grades. Five studied the intermediate GNVQ course in 2001 and four attained passes. Students attained above average results at foundation level in 2001. Over time, results show that a growing number complete their courses and their achievement in relation to their average point score at GCSE is good. It is very good for a minority of students.
370. The provision of the intermediate course in the sixth form helps those students who achieved foundation level in Year 12 by providing continuity of study and giving them the opportunity to take an accredited course related to their choice of career. Courses are mostly taken up by girls but there was one boy on the AVCE course in 2001 and his achievement was good and similar to that of the girls. The majority of students on these courses pursue a career linked to care, with nursing, social work and child-care being proposed destinations of present students. Students report how much they value the courses because they provide an accreditation linked to their proposed careers and, in the case of the intermediate students, a stepping stone to other courses, in childcare for example.
371. Standards are average overall with a minority doing better than this. Students on the AVCE 12 unit course understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care and manage their learning independently and highly effectively. Their assignments are thorough and extremely well presented with very good use of ICT and subject-specific vocabulary. They also use ICT to interrogate and research material, for example in relation to different complementary health therapies. These key skills are well taught.
372. First year AVCE students have made a good start to their course. They understand the importance of communication skills in health and social care settings and are beginning to write reports that meet unit requirements. They are still reliant on their teachers but they can plan and redraft their work and share ideas in discussions. Most on the intermediate course have progressed from foundation level. Key skills in communication are satisfactory. Most take accurate notes in class and use them as a basis for their assignments. They have lively discussions, for example on components of a healthy diet, and are prepared to ask their teachers for help to aid their learning.
373. The deployment of teachers causes some difficulties for some students. Assignments are not yet complete because students have seven different teachers and have to work on six units at the same time. One unit is taught by two different teachers. This can be confusing for some. Students on all courses do not analyse and evaluate their work sufficiently to attain the highest grades. Consequently, standards are lower than expected at this stage of the course.
374. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, mainly because teachers have excellent subject knowledge, plan very thoroughly and share objectives with the students at the start of each lesson. Teachers encourage students to carry out independent research and develop their reasoning and enquiry skills. Most use a style of questioning that is rigorous and challenging and this results in students gaining deeper knowledge and understanding. Theory and practice of health and social care are well related and students base some of their knowledge and understanding on experiences from work placements, visits to local agencies and information provided by outside speakers. In the best lessons, teachers achieve a good balance between direct presentations and students' independent research.

375. Health and social care is a popular subject and students are overwhelmingly positive. They work well together, have very good relationships with their teachers and enjoy the independent learning ethos of their courses. Students in their second year of the advanced course report that their learning is much improved by their increased understanding of time management and action planning. Their mature responses and excellent attitudes accelerate their learning.
376. Very good leadership and management give a high priority to the quality of learning. Assessment is very thorough, regular and informative. Students know exactly what they need to do to achieve specific grades. Record keeping is very secure, and planning for the courses as a whole and for individual lessons is of high quality. This is particularly important because staffing in the department is unsatisfactory. Nine teachers are allocated to the subject and several only teach one lesson each week.
377. Overall, there has been good improvement in provision and performance since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus was on art and design. Work was also sampled in the AS media studies course where standards are in line with those usually found nationally. Most demonstrate good evaluation skills when examining the science fiction genre. They respond informatively and critically to the work and most achieve well. A minority do not appreciate fully the requirements of assignments and, as a result, tend to drift away from the question in their writing.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good; lessons are well structured. Teachers show good subject knowledge and high teacher expectation is demonstrated through challenging students of all abilities to improve.
- Standards achieved in GNVQ examinations are well above the national average.
- Very good student attitudes to learning. Students are confident, attentive and work productively.

Areas for improvement

- To improve the level of resources.
- To consider the development of a sixth-form studio to allow freedom of access for course work.

378. The GNVQ examination results in art and design were well above average in 2001. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the higher award of distinction was well above average. The GNVQ courses are now well established and there is a very good match between students' competencies and the range of art and design courses offered.
379. Achievement in Year 13 is satisfactory. Standards are higher than those usually found nationally. The large majority have not only acquired skills and techniques, but also demonstrate a high level of presentation skills in their application. The well-planned provision of courses enables students to progress to higher levels and achieve well.

380. AS-level students in Year 12 are achieving well. They progress successfully from GCSE work into this vocational course. In lessons, all are reaching the standards required for the intermediate award. They can describe processes of art and design and discuss their current work. Good research leads to the successful completion of complex tasks, such as using the influence of the architect Gaudi on a coffee table design, or selecting the works of Picasso and Mondrian to investigate the effects of combining images by replacing the primary colour blocks of 'Composition' with sections of 'Weeping Woman'.
381. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Occasionally it is outstanding. The principal features of the very good teaching are clear objectives, good planning and classroom management with clearly defined studio procedures which are orderly and purposeful. Teachers show good subject knowledge in discussions, questioning and explanations of tasks. The most competent students are well challenged and are encouraged to continue their studies to a higher level. The outstanding teaching is creative and inspiring, widening students' imaginative horizons extremely well across a range of media. As a result, the high quality of learning leads to original and inspirational work, for example developing ideas based on sculpture and the work of Picasso in order to extend a study of ceramics.
382. The very good teaching has a powerful impact on students' attitudes as well as on standards. They take pride in their work but also show a readiness to evaluate work rigorously, based on a good knowledge of the assessment criteria.
383. Students show respect for the teachers' knowledge, and feel secure in discussions and when experimenting with techniques. They are attentive, articulate, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching. They are confident in using books and ICT to undertake research and to complete coursework. However, access to ICT is limited within the department. Students demonstrate responsibility for their own learning through their practical and theoretical coursework and related homework assignments.
384. Leadership and management are good, resulting in a shared commitment amongst both teachers and students to producing high quality work. There is no hint of complacency, rather a pervading commitment to raising standards still further.

HUMANITIES

The main focus was on geography, history and psychology. The range of provision in this area of the curriculum is satisfactory. A good feature is that several advanced courses are offered. Provision for religious education is unsatisfactory.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards on the AS- and A-level courses are above average.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good.
- The retention rate on the AS-level course is well above average.
- The subject is well led and there is thorough monitoring of students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Most students have yet to achieve sufficient fluency in essay writing.
- Guidance to students on the organisation of their copious notes.

385. Standards overall are good. The most recent GCE A-level results were above the national average, albeit from a small number of candidates, thus making strict statistical comparisons imprecise. There were no A-level entries at the time of the previous inspection. In relation to their GCSE results, candidates did better than expected. There has been no consistent pattern of male or female superiority in these results.
386. The standard of work seen in lessons and the scrutiny of students' files and coursework during the inspection is good. Evidence drawn from these sources suggests that current students will at least maintain the examination standards achieved in the previous two years. In both Years 12 and 13, students compile comprehensive notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources, including the Internet. In some cases however, the work in students' files is poorly organised, lacking the coherence needed in a revision source. All students use computers competently in support of their learning, as seen in Year 13 lessons where students were preparing a computer-aided presentation of individual research on natural hazards. These students have acquired a detailed knowledge of such hazards and their effects on different societies, together with the associated advanced technical vocabulary. All students produce well-researched coursework, often using advanced statistical methods to analyse fieldwork data. Most Year 12 students and about one third of those in Year 13 have yet to acquire an essay style sufficiently fluent to ensure the highest examination grades.
387. Teaching is very good overall and is never less than good. Characteristics of the teaching include a good tutorial style, inclusive questioning that encourages all students to participate actively, challenging content and brisk pace. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and infectious enthusiasm. These qualities, together with students' overwhelmingly positive attitudes, ensure that the quality of learning is good. Students appreciate the voluntary extra time that teachers devote to individual student's needs. Teachers' expert guidance on research methods results in students producing coursework of a high standard. Extended pieces of writing are marked regularly and students are given clear and accurate judgements of the quality of their work, which help them to improve it. Learning is promoted further by teachers' guidance in the use of a range of resources and frequent opportunities for students to organise their own learning. Students grasp these opportunities well, as shown by the way they pursue individual research, making good use of resources beyond the college. They gradually improve their skills, knowledge and understanding as they take on more advanced statistical methods of data analysis. They use books and ICT confidently in their enquiry work. Good relationships with their teachers give them the confidence to seek help without embarrassment and to present research findings to their classmates.
388. Very good leadership and management have a marked influence on the quality of teaching and learning. Students' progress is monitored through detailed analysis of a wealth of data. Careful deployment of teachers ensures that only the best qualified in terms of subject expertise teach in the sixth form. The quality of classroom teaching and consistency in marking are monitored regularly. As a result, high standards have been achieved. The department is seeking to effect improvements through its carefully considered forward planning. Improvement can only be assessed over a two-year period, since sixth-form teaching of the subject began. During that period, standards have been consistently above the national expectation. The popularity of the subject is illustrated by the high proportion of Year 12 students continuing with the subject in Year 13.

History

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

Strengths

- Very good subject knowledge of teachers.
- Very good lesson planning.

Areas for improvement

- The key skills of independent learning.

389. Standards are average overall. The prior attainment of the eight Year 12 students, seven of whom had achieved B grades at GCSE, is reflected in their overall attainment in lessons seen, which was above average but offset by the slightly below average written work produced. One Year 12 student and the three Year 13 students have not taken history at GCSE but their historical skills and understanding have developed to average standards. Results by three students at Advanced level in 1998 and 1999 were modest and there were no entries in 2000 and 2001. However, current Year 13 results at AS-level were at B to C grade averages and one student has applied to read history at university. The rising numbers of students, together with their prior attainment that is higher than in the recent past, indicate that standards are rising quickly and are likely to be sustained.

390. By Year 13, students are confident in their handling of ideas about totalitarianism and patriotism in their study of the changing nature of warfare. They are able to use their prior knowledge of the Napoleonic period in France and their awareness of the American War of Independence to explore the proposition that warfare in the late 18th century changed to include the promotion of ideas about liberty and equality together with a need for more social and economic control by the French government. Students showed sound understanding of the historical document used as a springboard for discussion. Students in Year 12 show a satisfactory understanding of the range of ideas explored in a lesson on humanism within a broader study of the Italian Renaissance. Students were able to apply knowledge of Roman and Greek societies gained during their GCSE course to comment upon philosophical aspects and their prior knowledge of medieval society where, as one student commented, 'People were born into a structure'. Their ICT skills enabled students in Year 12 to work upon pre-selected websites and to word process their analysis of Machiavelli's beliefs and the role of banking in the patronage of the arts during the Italian Renaissance. Several good examples of extended writing in individual coursework assignments were seen; note taking is satisfactory, particularly when applied to the highlighting of photocopied text, and student files are generally well ordered.

391. Teaching is very good, due mainly to the very good subject knowledge of teachers and to their very good planning of lessons. A lesson on humanism in the Italian Renaissance used teacher-generated visual resources, a skilfull questioning technique and good use of written, historical sources to help students to identify the main features of humanist thought. The topic makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of students in its proposition that the rather pessimistic, medieval view of human nature as inherently sinful was challenged by a view that there was an ideal attainable through the improvement of the individual and society. Coverage of the courses is thorough due to good planning and good use of resources, for example new texts in Year 13 and the use of computers as seen in Year 12.

392. Leadership and management are good. The AS- and A2-level courses are well established and the units of study meet students' interests and needs. Assessment

includes regular marking and feedback through detailed comments on coursework. Future development requires the design of tasks which promote more independent learning skills and opportunity to develop social skills, particularly oral communication through debate and extended argument. Students feel well supported and confident in their response to the challenges of both courses.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Clear assessment policy and monitoring systems.
- Good teaching of research methods.
- Teachers' high expectations.
- Pastoral and academic support.
- Positive working relationships between students and staff.
- Teaching quality.

Areas for improvement

- The identification of key skills to be taught.
- Independent learning skills.
- Key words dictionary.
- Punctuality to lessons.
- Writing skills.

393. Standards of work seen in psychology are above average in Year 12 and average in Year 13. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' knowledge of psychology causes the quality of their learning to be good. All students are able to explore and clarify values with respect to a number of psychological issues such as opportunities and constraints facing people living in different places under different conditions. As a result, students' achievements overall, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, are good.
394. Students gain a critical understanding of the terms 'obedience' and 'conformity', for example. They understand why Milgram's and Zimbardo's studies provoked a public outcry, particularly the ethical issues raised by their published work. Teachers use good, social influence research studies to illustrate their lessons. As a result, the more competent students write well and produce elaborate descriptions of a study or a theory. The less competent students occasionally run out of ideas but, with help, can think of correct explanations of the key approaches to psychology. Male and female students can collect data in two ways: empirically and rationally. Students enjoy a variety of learning experiences, such as team working, which aids their confidence. Both genders perform equally well in class. Students in Year 12 fully understand that human development is a dynamic process that means it is motivated or driven by certain forces.
395. Students in Year 13 apply a scientific process to learning about human behaviour. They make observations, produce facts about psychology, construct a theory to account for a set of related facts and then progress to generating expectations (hypotheses) from the theory.
396. The nature of psychology raises social and philosophical issues throughout the delivery of the subject content. Teachers are conscious of this and promote students' learning in these areas when appropriate. All students enjoy these discussions that advance their oral skills. Male and female students are equally competent to collect data to test

expectations. A good Year 13 lesson covered research methodology. Females are better at spelling, punctuation and grammar. All students can write about cognitive psychology and analyse and evaluate a range of psychological theories and studies. The more competent communicate their knowledge and understanding of psychology in a clear and effective manner. Students enhance their knowledge and perception of current psychological issues in a variety of contexts. Though encouraged to do so, a few students are reticent in their use of the vocabulary of psychology.

397. Examination results at AS-level in 2001 were below average at the end of Year 12. Female students perform better than male students in overall grades but not significantly so. Students make satisfactory progress from Year 12 to Year 13. The results at the end of Year 13 are below average for grades A and B. There is value added at both Years 12 and 13 in relation to the standards achieved on entry to the course. Overall, results in advanced courses over two years show a slight improvement with the average points score increasing. Predicted grades for 2002 suggest above average results at AS-level.
398. The quality of teaching is good. There is good knowledge and understanding of the core areas of cognitive, social developmental, individual differences and physiological psychology. As a result, lessons are planned effectively to develop an understanding of psychology as a scientific study of behaviour and experience. Teachers encourage the use of specialist, subject-related vocabulary and are good at helping students to understand the logic or important concepts of psychology. Students are well advised that psychology differs from common sense in so far as it seeks to collect objective and verifiable facts about behaviour and it constructs empirically based theories.
399. A very good lesson explored operant conditioning. Students learnt about E L Thorndike and Pavlov's work on classical conditioning. Teachers support well those students with particular learning difficulties. There is good use of ICT during or after lessons, particularly the Internet. Students increase their understanding of psychology by discussing their writing or research with their teacher and fellow students. Writing skills are variable. The strength of teaching is the informed commentary and thorough analysis of relevant psychological studies and methods. Good opportunities are provided for students to explore and clarify values with respect to a range of issues: conservation and change within the human environment and behaviour patterns of different people facing different constraints. Reports, when written, are clear enough so that teachers could repeat students' experiments without asking for extra information.
400. Leadership and management are good. The support and environment provided enable students to feel confident, valued and well placed to make the most of their opportunities in the sixth form. Teachers promote feelings of self-esteem and confidence. Psychology is taught as a socially inclusive discipline. There are contacts with further and higher education which benefit the students. Teachers look to raise all forms of student achievement. All questions to students are clearly phrased, unambiguous and encourage students to respond. However, students need more encouragement to expand on their answers.
401. Good improvement over time has been made to aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. Students are now provided with a sounder basis of factual knowledge of psychology. They are taught to develop informed attitudes and they have an increased awareness towards psychology and health issues which are encouraged throughout the delivery of the subject when appropriate. Students are well supported in order to thoroughly learn their material. Students are taught to search through the published literature and to be systematic in their search using the library, archives or Internet. Memory is improved by the organisation of material. Written work is assessed

accurately. The teachers can organise relevant information clearly and coherently using specialist vocabulary when appropriate. Attendance and the punctual submission of work remain issues to be resolved in 2002.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus was on English. There is no provision for modern foreign languages in this area of the curriculum.

English

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

Strengths

- Many students achieve well when account is taken of their levels of prior attainment.
- The levels of individual support and guidance given to students are good.

Areas for improvement

- Learning from each other through the key skill of discussion.
- The number of male students choosing to study the subject.

402. The 2001 Advanced level results were well below average, similar to those in 2000 but lower than those in 1999. No candidate obtained grades in the A-B range, as was the case in 2000. The very small numbers make national comparisons unreliable. Although far more females than males took the subject, over the last three years, there was no significant difference in their results. Overall, students achieve well when account is taken of their mostly modest GCSE grades.
403. Current standards are higher than recent results. The knowledge of texts is good, as are analytical skills in students' extended critical writing. In a Year 13 lesson, students contrast the stylistic techniques of Wordsworth, Hardy and Manley Hopkins in their portrayal of wildlife, commenting well about the poets' use of language and imagery and the contrasting forms and rhythms. Year 12 students display a mature understanding of the moral and social context of Tennessee Williams's 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and appreciate the interaction of the principal characters against that background.
404. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Sometimes it is good. The strengths lie in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of English literature and the media and the quality of the planning and preparation. They know the students well and guide and support them effectively throughout Years 12 and 13. High expectations require students to think analytically. As a result, many display mature, thoughtful attitudes and a growing confidence to express their own ideas. This leads, in turn, to personal, critical responses that are rooted in careful textual analysis and supported by satisfactory competence in the key communication skills of research, note taking and textual annotation.
405. There is very little opportunity to use computers on a regular basis but this is compensated by provision in the evenings and at weekends to communicate electronically with their teachers about how to improve their writing. In the lessons seen, a minority contributed little in discussion.
406. Good leadership and management provide a well-planned curriculum and have produced significant developments in teaching and learning styles. As a result, students achieve standards currently that are higher than the most recent examination results.