

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **HELSTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Helston, Cornwall

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112043

Headteacher: Dennis Johnson

Reporting inspector: Terry Parish  
15465

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 190668

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Hill  
Helston  
Cornwall

Postcode: TR13 8NR

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Andrew Earle

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Helston Community school is a much larger than average mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-19. There are 1648 pupils on roll including 348 in the sixth form. It is a popular school; the sixth form, in particular, is now drawing more students from further afield compared to recent years. The socio-economic circumstances of pupils are below average. Almost all pupils are white and about a sixth move into the area as parents take up jobs at the nearby naval base; this contributes to the relatively high number who start at and leave the school throughout the year. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about average but the proportion with statements of special educational need is above average. Their needs are wide and may be behavioural, medical or academic. The attainment of pupils on entry has been broadly average for some years but is rising and the current Year 7 is a little above average. The school forms an integral part of the local community which benefits from skills pupils learn and the charitable and social events the school creates or hosts. Since September 2001 the school has been a technology college and extra resources are already raising the quality of education that pupils enjoy further.

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

This is a very good school with several excellent features that lives up to its aim of 'Achievement for All'. It is a very inclusive school, providing opportunities for the talented and practical to excel in, for example, music, art, dance, photography, information and communication technology (ICT), construction skills and horticulture, and for the academic to pursue and attain high standards in a wide range of examination courses. Overall, GCSE standards are well above average. Pupils' very good attitudes and very good teaching enable them to achieve very well. This complex school is managed very efficiently and the headteacher provides excellent leadership and is always seeking ways to ensure pupils and the community benefit further. The money received by the school in the last financial year is average; the school provides very good value for money overall and the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

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

- The school provides very well for all pupils, particularly through its very broad curriculum in Years 10 and 11, the high standards it engenders at GCSE, and its excellent provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Leadership is very strong with a very effective departmental and school self-review process – this means that improvements to teaching and the curriculum are very effectively put into place.
- Standards, teaching and pupils' participation in music are generally excellent.
- The school communicates well, in its liaison with primary schools, to parents, and internally to its own staff. Links with primary schools through the Drop In Study Centre (DISC) and technology college liaison work are outstanding.

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

- There are no significant areas for development in the main, 11-16, school. Some minor improvements are suggested in the relevant section of this report, and there are some areas for development for the sixth form in the summary annex.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1996. Improvement since then has been very good. Overall standards at GCSE, particularly boys', and the proportion of pupils who attain five or more A\*-C grades have risen significantly. Standards in the sixth form have improved. Teaching is much better. Management of subjects has improved. The curriculum is broader and better meets the needs of all pupils. Bids for additional funding have been successful and are contributing to rising standards.



## STANDARDS

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

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

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

*Note that the school's performance at A/AS-level in 2001 is a B, above average, when compared to all providers, that is schools and colleges.*

Standards at the end of Year 9 tests in 2001 are above average overall. They are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Pupils in Year 9 in 2001 achieved well. This is consistent with achievement in the current Years 7-9 being good, as the standard of their work is above average. Though English is improving faster than average, the overall trend of end of Year 9 test results shows less improvement than has been achieved nationally. This is significantly due to erratic mathematics results caused, at least in part, by previous staffing difficulties. These should soon resolve themselves under the very good leadership of a new head of department. The trend in GCSE results is better than national improvement in both the overall points attained and the proportion of pupils getting five or more A\*-C grades. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more A\*-G grades or at least one A\*-G grade has actually declined since the last inspection. The reason for this is partly due to the increasing and significant numbers of pupils disapplied from elements of the National Curriculum. These pupils are successful in a range of craft, office and child care based vocational courses and certification courses which do not contribute to GCSE scores. These courses provide opportunities for pupils on them to do well and enter appropriate post-16 courses, which may lead to future employment, and certainly help them improve their attitudes, behaviour and standards of literacy and numeracy. By the end of Year 11 pupils achieve very well and both boys and girls do so equally.

The school's statutory targets for GCSE results in 2001 were well met. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are particularly strong in music, art and design, design and technology, aspects of ICT, for example computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), dance, literacy and much of science. Standards are above average in English and mathematics.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils in all age groups come to school keen to learn and this is reflected in their good levels of interest and involvement in all work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are good-natured and usually behave very well but when they move around the school they are sometimes careless of each other.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work together happily and leave the school as mature young adults. The relationships between pupils and their teachers in work-related subjects and in music are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall; very few are absent without sufficient reason.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. Teaching in English and mathematics is good overall, though each had a significant proportion of very good lessons during the inspection. Teaching of science is consistently very good and no lesson seen was less than good. Many, but not all, subjects were inspected in the sixth form; there were many very good and excellent lessons.

On a short inspection subjects in Years 7-11 are sampled rather than fully inspected. Obvious strengths across all subjects were teachers' own knowledge and understanding of subjects and their expectations and management of pupils, which means pupils are able to work productively, and are encouraged to make an effort and increase their knowledge and understanding of the work in hand. There is some inconsistency in the quality of marking that means pupils do not always know how to improve on a week-to-week basis, though setting pupils academic targets to aim for, and the monitoring of how well they are progressing towards them, are features of teaching which support the high standards achieved at GCSE. Homework is set and generally used well though the homework timetable is not followed as closely as it might be and pupils find this burdensome when too much is expected in a short time.

Pupils are very literate and helped to become so in English. Support for literacy in other areas is variable though technical language in all subjects is well covered and, overall, provision is good. Numeracy is taught well in mathematics and new strategies for teaching and learning about numeracy are beginning to filter up from Years 7 and 8; provision is satisfactory.

This is a very inclusive school; teaching and opportunities for learning meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have excellent provision. DISC is an innovative way of providing teaching support across many traditional and non-traditional subjects and skills. Talented pupils have a wealth of ways in which teaching helps them excel, including music, art and design, dance, and ICT. Academically gifted pupils can choose to learn in a wide variety of courses and teachers provide extra lessons if they need them. Pupils also have access to 'accelerated learning', for example in mathematics.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. There is very good provision of a work-related curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. Innovative support for younger pupils and ongoing specialist and curriculum provision.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Music, art, sport, clubs and activities, school council, and school/pupil consultation activities all contribute very well. Local cultural attachments are very strong and pupils and students take part in the acclaimed Helston Flora day.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good care for pupils' welfare and pastoral needs is coupled with very good assessment procedures to help them make progress with their learning. Counselling provision is innovative. There is a very good partnership with parents.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership and planning by the headteacher, supported by key staff, manage a complex and dynamic organisation very efficiently. Improvements to provision and standards come about largely through extensive consultation.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The chair shows clear understanding of issues and provides a very good sounding board for proposed changes.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Departmental self-evaluation of subject performance, with senior management monitoring is as rigorous as any seen. Interpretation of data by subject heads and teachers needs further refinement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Best value is sought through challenging the school's curriculum provision and consulting with parents and pupils. Money is very well spent with the school always seeking value for money on goods and services. Technology college resources have been intelligently and quickly utilised to improve provision.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good teaching and high expectations</li> <li>• The good progress that pupils make</li> <li>• Pupils become mature and helpful young people</li> <li>• Pupils like the school and college.</li> <li>• Any problems can be discussed with the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement along the path between sites</li> <li>• Toilet provision</li> <li>• Homework provision and the timetable</li> <li>• Reports on academic progress</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by parents. The path has been improved and reorganisation will mean it is used less. Inspectors are more concerned about roads between sites and feel that the local authority could improve crossing points significantly and so reduce risk. Inspectors agree that the toilets are in need of renovation, though they are generally very well looked after by pupils and in no worse repair than some staff toilets. Following consultation with pupils, the school has earmarked funds to improve pupil toilets. Use of homework is satisfactory though it is sometimes marked late and not all teachers adhere to the timetable. The school makes very good efforts to inform and involve parents. Annual reports, coupled with the reviews sent home during the year, give very good information about pupils' progress.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The people who use it call Helston Community School sixth form a 'college' both in documentation and conversation. It is very much larger than the average school sixth form; with 348 male and female students it is about twice the size. Helston 'College' also offers a much wider range of courses, particularly vocational courses, and, like the numbers of students, these are increasing. A and AS-level, GNVQ and NVQ courses are all well represented. Industry standard courses like CISCO systems computer technician course are offered; this is internationally recognised and a passport to future employment. Most students do come from the school as about 73 per cent stay on after 16. Eighty-five per cent of students also complete courses. Students from other schools are increasing in number and the school caters for adults seeking qualifications too. The attainment of students on entry is average and their socio-economic status is mixed. 45 per cent qualifies for Education Maintenance Allowance. The number of students designated as having special educational needs is much higher than generally found in sixth forms, largely because they are well provided for and acquiring skills and knowledge much needed by local businesses and industry. The sixth form is very well staffed and this contributes to its success.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

This is a very effective sixth form because of its inclusiveness; it provides very well for a full range of abilities and preferences and students are able to proceed appropriately to coveted university placements or employment and all places in between. It is also a sixth form that pays for itself; in fact, it makes some profit which is used effectively in the mainstream school. Cost effectiveness is good. Across the very broad range of courses provided, teaching, learning and students' achievements and standards of work are good. Leadership and management are now very good and there is a clear vision to make provision even better. The current rationalisation of accommodation to more firmly create a 'college' that can provide better for students and adults in the community is part of this. The extensive development of vocational courses, already applauded for tackling skills shortages in the local construction industry, is another. Readers should note that a 'very effective' sixth form in a school equates with 'outstanding' provision at a college.

**Strengths**

- Very high standards in some external examinations in 2001, including art and design, chemistry, media studies, mathematics, music, music technology and physics.
- Students' achievements are very good or excellent in a range of subjects. These include: art and design, photography, music, ICT, construction and horticulture. Students learn well in these subjects because of the high standards of teaching they receive.
- Recent curriculum developments, especially in terms of vocational education, have increased the inclusiveness of the college's provision, and the quality of the vocational programme is excellent.
- The provision made for students with special educational needs is excellent.

**What could be improved**

- The standards attained by female students, especially those following A-level courses.
- The provision for careers education and guidance, especially work placements, to help raise aspirations.
- The provision for personal and social education. All students should have greater opportunities to take part in activities outside of their academic or vocational studies.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, particularly at tutorials.

*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

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> In 2001, four fifths of students gained grades A and B; this represents excellent achievement. Achievement of current students is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning is currently good.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Standards in examination results in 2001 were well above average and present students are recording above average standards; they are achieving well. Teaching and learning is good.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Standards in various examinations in 2001 present a mixed picture, but most students made good progress. A similar situation exists with present students who benefit from good teaching.
Computing and ICT	<b>Excellent.</b> An excellent range of courses allows students to choose and specialise appropriately. This, and excellent teaching, encourages them to achieve very well.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Results are average, but better than expected from students' GCSE results. Present students are achieving well as a result of good teaching.
Art and design	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards in examinations are well above average and present students also record very high standards. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers inspire and motivate students and encourage high levels of creativity. Provision for photography is excellent.
Music & Music technology	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards are well above average and students achieve at least very well. Outstanding accommodation and resources enhance students' work. Teaching is often excellent.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> A-level results are above average and are improving. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is good overall. Students achieve satisfactorily and their learning is helped by good fieldwork.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A-level results are in line with national average figures, with no recent improvements. Students achieve satisfactorily. The work of current students indicates that standards are now rising. Teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic; teaching is good.
Law	<b>Good.</b> A-level results are in line with national averages overall, though they are below average for grades A and B. Present students benefit from good teaching and expectations are high.
Sociology	<b>Good.</b> A-level results are below average, but many students start the course with a low knowledge base. Good teaching means that current students make good progress in lessons and achieve well.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> A-level examination results are above average for grades A to E, but are below average for grades A and B. Standards recorded by current students are above average. Teaching is good and students of all levels of ability achieve well.

English	<b>Good.</b> A-level results were average in 2001 but were well above average in the three previous years. Standards of work are above average. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
Construction	<b>Excellent.</b> Student achievements in this NVQ course are excellent. Teaching is excellent and leads to students making rapid progress in their learning.
Horticulture	<b>Excellent.</b> Student achievements in this NVQ course are excellent. Teaching is excellent and leads to students making rapid progress in their learning and developing very well as young adults.

Standards of work and teaching in physics are good whilst in biology they are satisfactory. A-level product design was visited and a high level of work was seen. Students have many credible ideas and are making extensive and very good use of computer-assisted design and manufacturing equipment (CAD/CAM); some of their manufactured designs are of undergraduate standard, as is some CAD work for a manufacturing course. A-level electronics is also of a good standard and very good use is being made of programmable integrated circuits and electronic modelling software. GNVQ Intermediate leisure and tourism was sampled and students are making satisfactory progress though standards are below average. A-level dance was briefly sampled; few students take the course and examination standards are low. Photography is a very popular course and standards are very high, fostered by excellent teaching. Vocational courses in business administration and childcare were sampled; teaching and students' achievement are at least good.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Regular assessments provide good information about students' progress. Pastoral and personal support is clear and effective. Advice for careers options is good but has areas for development. Attendance monitoring is inefficient.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Development planning is now clear and curriculum developments are now better and meet the needs of present and potential students. Standards still need to rise further, particularly of females, and the use of newly acquired data analysis systems should help this.

#### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice of courses</li> <li>• Quality of teaching</li> <li>• They enjoy the sixth form</li> <li>• Printed information before they join is helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>• Advice about future options</li> <li>• How homework load is allocated</li> </ul>

Only 50 student questionnaires were returned. Their analysis has been included with other information made available from the school's own questionnaires and gleaned from talking to students. An overview is that students are generally very happy with their lot, would like to have more sport and other activities on the timetable and would prefer to be treated as students rather than past pupils. The accommodation changes that will take effect next September should suit them well. Inspectors generally agree with

students' views though consider many opportunities are provided for them which they can pursue if they wish to.

### **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**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The school provides very well for all pupils, particularly through its very broad curriculum in Years 10 and 11, the high standards it engenders at GCSE, and its excellent provision for pupils with special educational needs**

1. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has developed considerably over recent years. It caters for the needs of all pupils and is very inclusive in its nature. The high standards pupils attained in 2001 at GCSE are described in the 'standards' section of the summary. Judgements and comments about the very good teaching, which supports these standards, are made in the 'teaching' section; a brief description of three very good lessons is included here. A very good English lesson was fostered by very effective and productive working relationships between the teacher and pupils. The teacher had very good knowledge about Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and consequently led a very purposeful and well-paced lesson. Pupils learnt very well through well-organised discussion and the teacher's interventions and prompts. A mathematics teacher's confident subject knowledge and purposeful but relaxed manner initiated a very good Year 11 lesson about Pythagoras' Theorem. A good pace was set and a variety of activities used to motivate and interest pupils, including well-structured questions and past GCSE papers. These activities were timed, and encouraged pupils to think and work quickly, as they will have to in examinations. Teaching and learning were both very good in a Year 11 science lesson. A prompt and brisk start had pupils keen to answer questions and their answers were noted on the board so others could make notes. Literacy was encouraged through pupils having to use correct scientific terms. Very well prepared resources helped pupils learn very effectively about genetics
2. The highest attaining pupils can take up to and even beyond the equivalent of 13 GCSEs. The curriculum offered now allows pupils to take accelerated courses in music and technology which means they will be able to achieve GCSE a year early and then pursue AS-level. They may also take media studies in addition to English language and English literature, law, Latin and up to three separate sciences.
3. There is a broad curriculum of vocational courses including business studies, engineering, leisure and tourism, and ICT at either foundation or intermediate level GNVQ. The GNVQ programme is supplemented by a wide, and increasingly diverse, range of work-based courses. The school offers Young Enterprise, the XL programme, delivering the ASDAN qualification at bronze and even silver level, and NVQs in construction, horticulture, motor vehicle and, in September 2002, health and beauty. These courses all support academically lower attaining pupils and have a strong vocational and work placement element. Pupils were observed participating in the first three during the inspection. All were fully involved, interested and doing well.
4. The fast-track approach to qualifications for more able pupils and disapplication of many others from the National Curriculum, to allow them to follow possibly more useful and motivating vocational courses, have both been ideas recently mooted by government. Helston Community School has been both adventurous and risk taking in recent curriculum developments. 'Innovative' and 'at the cutting edge' are appropriate descriptions.

5. Within the Year 7 curriculum there is the provision of a nurture group in mathematics, English, geography, history and religious education. This provides specialist, special educational needs, teaching and learning support assistance for those pupils who are deemed in need of this provision. In Year 8 this 'nurturing' continues in mathematics and English and many subjects in Years 8-11 create smaller classes for the lowest attaining pupils so that they can benefit from more focused learning support assistant support. There is a high number of learning support assistant staff, who are generally experienced and almost all of whom are currently undergoing additional training and gaining additional qualifications.
6. The additional pupil support provided by the learning development team extends well beyond the classroom and the legal obligations of maintaining individual education plans, holding stage and annual reviews and ensuring that the Code of Practice is being fully implemented. To support more vulnerable pupils there is effective specialist lunchtime supervision by learning support assistants, primarily aimed at Years 7 and 8.
7. To address the full range of special educational needs there are specially trained learning support assistants who run daily or weekly sessions for pupils with reading difficulties, dyslexia, dyspraxia and autistic syndromes such as aspergers. These activities are given the titles *WORD WARRIORS*, *DRIVE*, *CIRCUIT*, and *PATHFINDERS*. In addition the school works closely with the County Audiology services and has a specialist attached learning support assistant.
8. Pupils in need of emotional, social or behavioural support are given the additional facility of OASIS for pupils in Years 7-9 and HAVEN for older pupils. A fully qualified counsellor, a previous learning support assistant who the school arranged and paid for to complete a counselling course, runs OASIS. The counsellor works very closely with the school pastoral system, the County Psychologist and other support agencies. HAVEN is again run by a learning support assistant and this service provides a 'chill out', drop-in centre for pupils who are having social and emotional problems.
9. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers many opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. These are described in the section above. These opportunities continue into the sixth form and some are described in the sixth form section of the report.

**Leadership is very strong with a very effective departmental and school self-review process – this means that improvements to teaching and the curriculum are very effectively put into place.**

10. The school sustains a rigorous and comprehensive system of self-evaluation, which includes a systematic review of each department by the senior management team through lesson observations, work scrutiny, pupil interviews and analysis of assessment data. Teachers and heads of department are well informed of this system and make good use of it in their work. Information gleaned from this exercise provides important information for teachers seeking to reach their own targets as part of performance management.
11. After each review the department receives a written report which includes identified strengths and areas for development. Action plans to address the areas for development and to share good practice are drawn up in consultation with the senior management team and are monitored regularly by them. Individual teachers receive a

full and supportive debriefing immediately after they have been observed teaching. Feedback from these observations has, in many cases, been integrated into teacher's planning for performance management.

12. At whole school level, the senior management team undertakes regular monitoring of homework diaries and surveys of pupils' attitudes to lessons and informs relevant heads of department or heads of year issues that are identified. Alongside this system, and integrated into it, is a recently developed system of departmental self-review in which departments, assisted by the senior management team, assess the effectiveness of their work through a range of agreed activities including work scrutiny, analysis of assessment data and lesson observations. Heads of department report regularly to the senior management team on their progress and annually to the governing body.
13. As a result of the self-review and self-evaluation process, the senior management team has a very good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development in the school and uses this to help school planning. The school development plan includes many of the issues identified in the last round of review. Teaching and standards have improved whilst these evaluation processes have been in place.

#### **Standards, teaching and pupils' participation in music are generally excellent**

14. Standards of attainment in music range from above average in Year 7 to well above average in Year 9 and pupils' achievement is good in performing, composing and listening. The 2001 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 confirm a very high proportion of pupils gaining level 5 and above. Good achievement is continued in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in these years are confident performers and creative composers. They read music fluently and have well above average facility in music computer literacy. GCSE results are well above average, being mainly A\*, A and B grades.
15. Over 70 pupils are at grade 6 or above on at least one instrument (grade 5 is equivalent to about grade A at GCSE), over 20 are at grade 8 and over 30 pupils play at county level.
16. Teaching, which is always good and often very good, challenges and stimulates pupils of all attainment levels and supports them well. Pupils' wide range of musical experiences, styles and types are enhanced by a rich extra-curricular provision of instrumental lessons, ensemble coaching and opportunities to perform publicly. Over 200 pupils receive peripatetic music lessons at school and over 250 take part in one or more of 15 extra-curricular music groups. These are wide ranging, including choirs, bands, ensembles and orchestras. Inspectors were privileged to see both the jazz orchestras perform and adults and past pupils contribute to a public concert. All performances were outstanding and the Helston Senior Jazz Orchestra is going once again to the national competitive finals in Manchester. The relationships between these particular musicians and the Jazz Band director are obviously excellent and enrich their performances. Around a third of school musicians also take leading roles in community music which is a great tradition in the locale.

**The school communicates well, in its liaison with primary schools, to parents, and internally to its own staff. Links with primary schools through the Drop In Study Centre (DISC) and technology college liaison work are outstanding**

17. There are very strong links with 16 feeder schools and two-way visits between pupils and staff each year. A head of school has regular meetings with primary headteachers, discussing planning, liaison and partnership activities. The school has a leading role in the local district initiative for 'Linking Learning'. Twenty-three primary and two secondary schools successfully work together to support, for example, professional development for teachers.
18. The school is always ready to exploit new opportunities to further enhance the provision for its pupils and students and whenever possible it reaches out to the wider community, to share worthwhile initiatives with other local schools. The Drop In Study Centre (DISC) is an innovative and very successful venture provided through the New Opportunities Fund. Its friendly team of staff organises activities each evening for up to 30 pupils from local primary schools as well as providing a supportive after-school working environment for the school's own pupils and students. DISC provision includes dance and circus skills as well as academic pursuits. Through initiatives enabled by technology college funding, Years 5 and 6 pupils are able to benefit from the challenges of activities in mathematics, ICT and science taught by specialist teachers. In a mathematics master class, for instance, able Year 6 pupils developed great enthusiasm as they learnt to use different calculator functions to complete a sequence of challenging calculations.
19. Technology college status has also resulted in strengthened links with staff at 17 feeder primary schools and with a partner secondary school. An excellent start has been made to exploit the opportunities opened up by the funding now available. A very successful shared training day recently enabled around 300 staff from local schools to hear high profile visiting speakers as well as giving them opportunities to develop effective professional relationships with each other. Links are growing all the time, so that primary teachers and pupils can benefit from the expertise of secondary teachers and specialist equipment. For example, primary pupils are able to use computer-aided design software to create designs in their own schools, and then to email these to Helston Community School so that parts can be cut out accurately for them with computer-aided manufacturing equipment. The school's technology college liaison officer and the community technician maintain scheduled links and provide close support. For example, a primary school was recently able to borrow computer projection equipment and an interactive white board, both relatively expensive new technology aids to teaching and learning, and receive support in their use, so that their effectiveness could be evaluated prior to spending decisions.
20. Very successful efforts are made to supply parents with all relevant information, so that they are fully involved as members of the extended school and college community, and can contribute as partners to both pupils' and students' education.
21. Annual reports together with interim review reports and the very well attended parents' meetings give much very good information about what pupils and students have learnt, and how their performance compares with expectations. Reports also tell pupils what steps they should take to improve further. In addition, pupils have a work review discussion with a tutor at least once each year. High quality homework diaries also allow comments about progress and standards to pass between teachers and parents. Parents are also supplied with full information about the curriculum, including choices offered in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, the work expected and the assessment procedures in place.
22. There are regular surveys of parents' views (through questionnaires and focus groups) and pupils' views (40 pupils every two weeks), and the school informs

parents about the results of these, and tells them of action planned in response to any criticism. The weekly Helstonian' newsletter is of excellent quality and provides prompt, comprehensive coverage of the school's news, and planned events not only to the school community but also to the surrounding neighbourhood, including local primary schools and shops. Over 2000 copies are sent out and it provides valuable encouragement for pupils by celebrating their achievements. Anyone who does not get a paper copy can find the latest edition among other information on the school's web site. The school welcomes enquiries from parents, and staff give priority to responding rapidly to any concerns; for instance, the headteacher sets aside an hour every morning to meet with any parents who want to see him.

23. Arrangements for informing staff are particularly important because of the way they are based around three widely spaced sites. The headteacher and senior management team take very good steps to ensure staff receive all relevant information, so as to underpin effective teaching and learning. The usual whole school and departmental schedules of meetings and training days operate efficiently but the main ongoing source of information about administrative and other matters is the weekly staff bulletin, which includes a wealth of diverse articles. These range from important updates about individual pupils and students, for instance about particular medical needs, to feedback on the various consultations that are carried out. Recently, for instance, the head of sixth form wrote about how discussions with a group of Year 11 to 13 students contributed to the vision for further developing post-16 provision. The benefits of the effective flow of information are very evident with regard to the site relocation taking place at the time of the inspection. Detailed information about the major programme of room re-allocations, to achieve a logical separation of the main school and the college onto different sites, is proving very effective in enabling staff to cope equably with the considerable disturbance involved.

#### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

24. There are no significant improvements to be made in the 11-16 school. There are some minor issues, such as raising attendance further and making better use of assessment data in the classroom. Some teaching could improve from satisfactory to good or very good and marking become consistently good. The broad curriculum provision in Years 10-11 needs some attention to detail and further review. Library and private study provision in general could develop further and homework timetables be better kept to. However, all such improvements are in hand, are within the scope of the school improvement plan, are simply addressed or will be significantly resolved as the school and college complete their movements on site.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

### 25. Sixth form

- (1) Raise standards attained by female students by using data better to identify where there may be under-achievement, adapting teaching, learning and curriculum provision where appropriate and/or determining how the aspirations of female students may be raised. (Paragraphs: 26, 49).
- (2) Improve provision for careers education and guidance, especially for students following non-vocational courses. (Paragraphs: 37, 44).
- (3) Improve further the provision for personal and social education and 'enrichment' activities across the board. (Paragraphs: 37, 38, 46).
- (4) Increase the rigour of how attendance is monitored so that data better reflects the actual position – students generally attend lessons. Then use the correct data to identify areas or students that give concern and tackle any issues so that attendance improves further. (Paragraphs 32, 45).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	46
	Sixth form	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		40

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7– 11</b>							
Number	1	18	16	11	0	0	0
Percentage	2	39	35	24	0	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	6	20	30	10	0	0	0
Percentage	9	30	45	15	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 - 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one or two percentage points.*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1300	348
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	143	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1300	348
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	380	2

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	190

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.8
National comparative data	90.9

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	127	127	254

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	86	98
	Girls	111	94	92
	Total	200	180	190
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (75)	71 (63)	75 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (29)	41 (39)	29 (34)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	95	98
	Girls	113	102	96
	Total	202	197	194
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (80)	78 (64)	76 (64)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (39)	39 (39)	30 (38)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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



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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	124	115	239

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	70	107	118
	Girls	77	110	115
	Total	147	217	233
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (53)	91 (91)	97 (97)
	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	45.9 (43.1)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14	71
	National		

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	49	49	98

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	19.7	16.4	17.7	5	8.5	6.3
National	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	8	100
	National		N/a

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	1645
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	40	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	87.54
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.80

#### **Education support staff: Y7– Y13**

Total number of education support staff	46
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1222

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	26.7
Key Stage 4	21.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	4135102
Total expenditure	4115094
Expenditure per pupil	2641
Balance brought forward from previous year	-20008
Balance carried forward to next year	0

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1600
Number of questionnaires returned	267

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	60	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	60	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	58	15	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	61	19	5	2
The teaching is good.	24	67	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	57	16	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	52	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	45	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	18	59	16	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	31	55	6	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	58	6	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	50	5	1	9

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting expressed concern of how the parental withdrawal of pupils from religious education was handled. No letters expressed such concern. Letters expressed concern about the toilets and the pathway between the upper and lower site.

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

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

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

26. In the 2001 public examinations, students were entered for some 22 GCE A-level and AVCE courses, five AS-level subjects and three GNVQ intermediate courses. Overall results for advanced courses were average when compared to results in maintained schools; males had well above average results whilst the results of females were average. If the school's results are compared to those of all providers, schools and colleges, then they are above average. The school's target for students' average points score of 17.0 was well met and the vocational target of 87 per cent success was well exceeded; all students passed. The entry policy, for students who competed courses in 2001, was broad and inclusive and their examination standards, prior to starting courses, very mixed – from few GCSEs of low grade to many at A and B grades. Students achieved well overall, males achieving better than females. There is no obvious cause for this difference in achievement, only a suggestion that significant efforts to raise boys' achievement pre-16, which have been successful, have followed through to post –16. The school has acknowledged the need to keep male/female achievement under review and track performance by gender more rigorously. Results in 2000 indicate students achieved better than in 2001. Current work indicates students are achieving well in many subjects and no subject shows evidence of unsatisfactory achievement. Retention rates on course are generally very good, sociology being an exception which may be related to relatively low entrance requirements.
27. Results for subjects entering significant numbers in 2001 show that students in art and design A-level all attained A or B grades and results were consequently very high compared to national figures, as they were in mathematics; in art and design (vocational), chemistry, media studies, music, physics and general studies, students attained well above average; students attained above average results in biology and geography; in sociology, law, psychology, physical education and business (vocational), students attained below average. In other courses, with significant numbers, attainment was average. English language A-level showed a significant dip, from well above average to average, in 2001. The school investigated the reasons for this and the problem seems to have now been addressed. Geography results, on the other hand, continued to improve and 53 per cent of a relatively large entry of 26 attained A or B grades. The pattern of results in 2001 is largely reflected in current work though there is a general air of improvement in most subjects, particularly so in law and psychology.

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

28. Students show great appreciation for the friendly environment offered by the college and respond to it very positively. They show very good attitudes in their willingness to work hard and to succeed in their chosen subjects, across the range of academic and vocational courses. Those who join the school at the beginning of Year 12 are well integrated and show the same confidence and commitment to learning as others do. Attitudes are if anything better than at the previous inspection, with no hint now of the unsuitable atmosphere previously noted in a few groups containing pupils with special educational needs. As previously, students' capacity for private study is well developed. In addition, they show a very good level of maturity in their co-operation

with others and in the way they respond to any opportunities to contribute to the life of the wider school community.

29. In lessons, a high level of interest and involvement is apparent. Students listen to their teachers and to each other, are keen to answer questions, and generally cope well when they are expected to pursue tasks independently. Students preparing for an examination in administrative and secretarial procedures (CASP), for example, showed great concentration as they practised their computer skills in preparing a business presentation. When teaching is at its best, students confidently show a range of learning skills, as in one business studies lesson where they built on their research findings and gave presentations to explain the use of an email package. Their readiness to give and receive evaluations of each other's work further contributed to their learning. When there is less stimulation for them to make their own contribution to activities or discussions, they still work hard but tend to be more passive, with little use of initiative to volunteer new ideas.
30. Relationships are very good between students and also with staff. Students know teachers are keen to help them succeed. They appreciate being treated as sensible young adults and respond with friendly respect, adding to the effective climate for learning. In response to their teachers' expectations, they show a good sense of responsibility for their own learning. For instance, they take generally take good care in organising their folders of work. Lower attaining students at times find this more difficult. However, those with special educational needs who follow practical courses, especially in horticulture and construction, give much careful attention to successfully completing and arranging their written work, just as they show great pride in using the practical skills they develop. Most students make good use of the time they are given for independent study, though a few individuals have difficulty in organising their workload and need the extra support that is extended by teachers to help them maintain progress.
31. Some other aspects of personal development are good in the sixth form. As at the previous inspection, students make an important contribution to life of the rest of the school community when opportunities arise. For instance, through the *WORD WARRIOR* scheme a considerable minority of sixth form students help less able younger ones to develop their reading skills. A few others run the cyber café, or contribute to the running of the Drop In Study Centre (DISC) after school. Those involved in whole-school musical activities such as the very successful jazz orchestra put much effort into developing their own skills and make an impressive contribution to the cultural life of the school and wider community.
32. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students' enthusiasm for learning means that they mostly attend their lessons regularly, seldom staying away without due cause. For those on education maintenance allowance, the associated attendance requirements and careful checks by staff are an effective additional incentive where, just occasionally, this is needed. A minority are reluctant to comply with the college's requirements about attending registration periods at the start of the morning and afternoon and this means attendance records are inaccurate.
33. The retention rate, the proportion of students who complete their courses, is 85 per cent. This is good and indicates at least good guidance towards or selection of the right courses in the first place and probably very good support and guidance during the course, if the student needs them.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

34. The inspection took place during transferral of sixth form teaching rooms to the school lower site. The planning for this movement is exemplary but it is recognised that moving rooms and resources just prior to the inspection week caused a little extra anxiety to staff during the inspection. Sixty-two lessons were inspected for a significant amount of time and more were briefly visited or what was going on and to have a brief chat with teachers and students. Overall, inspectors considered teaching and learning to be good. Of the 62 lessons, six were excellent, 16 very good, 30 good and 10 satisfactory. Fifteen subject areas were sufficiently inspected to make firm judgements about teaching. The teaching in each is at least good and this is the case in all other areas inspectors spent some time in. In music, teaching is excellent and often inspirational and is reflected in the very high standard of music in the school. In ICT work, overall, teaching is very good; it is excellent in computing and the very knowledgeable teaching is supporting innovation in courses and techniques. In art and design teaching is very good overall and leads to very high standards of work. Photography was not inspected but was visited and the very high quality of work produced by highly motivated students is sometimes breathtaking. This indicates inspirational teaching. In the new vocational subjects of horticulture and construction, teaching is excellent. This is notable as neither instructors are qualified teachers. However, if teaching is about motivation, support, encouragement, very high expectations, raising standards of literacy and numeracy, and managing potentially difficult pupils with aplomb, these instructors are formidable teachers.
35. Particularly strong in all teaching are teachers' knowledge and understanding; teachers really know their subjects well and this most often leads into enthusiasm about the subject and motivates students well. This is overtly seen in subjects like music, art and design, design and technology, horticulture and construction because many people can hear or see the fruits of students' intellectual and physical efforts. But it is also apparent in law, geography and ICT and other subjects. Other comparative strengths are the management of students and the effectiveness of teaching methods. Students at Helston, by their nature, do not need much if any behavioural management, but some do need a degree of coercion to do their best. Teachers are very good at ensuring students participate, work to targets and are exposed to a variety of teaching methods, including group work and presentations so that few can avoid developing good self-presentation skills. This was obvious in many lessons and through the clarity and length of discussions inspectors had with students. They were keen to explain their work and could do so well.

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

36. Curriculum arrangements in the college are very good. Some advanced vocational education (AVCE) and general vocational education (GNVQ) intermediate options, and a growing range of vocational subjects, enhance the wide range of A/AS-levels offered. The vocational courses also offer opportunities for a small group of adult learners. Provision is most successful in meeting the needs of a socially diverse student body, including students with special educational needs, and involves some exciting collaborative work with the local business community. The college has very good plans prepared to develop its vocational provision further and to involve more adult learners. The present curriculum is relevant to students' needs; it is socially inclusive and offers very good opportunities for progression, either to further education, to higher education, or to the world of work. The curriculum offered is innovative and represents an enterprising response to local circumstances, though

there are statutory infringements; no daily act of collective worship is offered, nor is any religious education taught to students apart from those taking A-level religious studies.

37. The emerging vocational curriculum allows students, many of who gained only modest GCSE results, to hone their work-related skills. A key strength is the quality of the work-related opportunities presented across a variety of courses. Students following more traditional A/AS-level options have a very good choice of subjects. This choice is enhanced by the availability of subjects as diverse as dance, photography, law and psychology. Students on A-level courses are given very good advice on higher education opportunities. This aspect of the college's work is well managed and the recent move to electronic university applications has improved efficiency. Some areas of under-provision, however, can be identified. Though the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and offers good learning opportunities, the provision for some enrichment activities, and some aspects of careers education and guidance, is less strong. The personal and social education programme is thin and students have a comparative lack of opportunities to follow enrichment courses. In part, this situation arises because the curriculum, especially in Year 12, is crowded for many A-level students who are following four or five subjects. Some aspects of the careers education and guidance programme need developing. Though the level of advice offered to students progressing to higher education is very good and thorough, the students themselves were critical of other aspects of the programme. At present ad hoc work placements opportunities exist for students who express a clear career preference, but for others, opportunities are limited. The college does not offer work placements for all allied to a programme to boost aspirations, especially for female students, and to address issues involving equal opportunities. Sporting and recreational opportunities are also limited for college students.
38. The provision for students' personal development is good overall, despite the limitations due to lack of formal planning for enrichment of the curriculum. The inclusive nature of the sixth form is a valuable asset. Care is taken to ensure that each tutor group, while taking account of friendship groups, includes a mix of students with a wide range of interests and abilities. In lessons, expectations of paired and group work mean that students learn from each other and to continue to develop their social skills. Opportunities to help younger students, most notably through the *WORD WARRIOR* reading support programme, involve a large minority of students in meeting the needs of others in the school community. The head of sixth form recognises that there is room to explore ways of involving more students in supporting others in the school community. Respect and understanding for feelings and emotions are appropriately developed in many subjects studied. They have a particularly high profile in art and music and also are very evident in horticulture. Here, there is great encouragement for students to celebrate the living world, including the plants they grow and even the robin that comes so near to them as they work. Awareness of local traditions is high, as at the previous inspection. Students are encouraged to take pride in their own local culture and to keep it alive by joining in the town's annual 'Flora Day'.

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

### **Assessment**

39. Parents and students are kept informed of assessments through an annual written report and a parents' evening as well an interim review. The format and content of reviews and annual reports are successfully pitched so as to be very helpful to both



students and their parents. They include a clear indication of how the student is progressing with each course. The annual report has in addition an informative summary about what has been studied and there is very good use of subject specific detail about what the student has learnt.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

40. Students' pastoral and personal needs are supported to good effect. Induction to the sixth form is good, starting during Year 11, when students are informed of the provision offered. Due care is taken to help them consider whether the college will meet their needs or whether some other post-16 route is their best option. Good efforts are made to offer students their preferred subject combinations if they choose to join the sixth form. Those joining from other schools are fully informed in advance about the academic and pastoral provision and tutors pay appropriate attention to monitoring how they settle in, both academically and socially, during their first weeks at the school.
41. The flow of information from the school is excellent. Before students enrol in the sixth form the prospectus and course handbook provide both them and their parents with a very full picture of the breadth of provision and of the demands of the various courses. The student contract ensures that students and parents all understand what the college provides and the commitment it expects from them. A separate booklet gives students further helpful details about organisation and expectations. Other good steps to inform parents include an evening meeting with a talk from a visiting university speaker about the university application process.
42. Systems for academic and pastoral support are clear and well understood. Tutors and subject teachers are readily available if students need extra help or guidance over either academic or personal matters. There are good systems for noting and following up concerns about the progress of any individual. Students rate highly the accessibility of extra help from their teachers. As well as day-to-day support, tutors hold individual discussions with students, to discuss information gathered from subject teachers about how they are doing. As at the previous inspection, these sessions make an important contribution. Students appreciate the way they help them set targets for their own further progress with learning, and teachers are planning to increase their frequency.
43. Support for students with special educational needs is particularly effective. Those transferring from the main school are especially appreciative of the way they can continue their education within a known environment. They are very successfully supported, so that they grow in self-esteem and confidence as independent young adults.
44. The careers' programme has both strengths and areas for development. Students receive very good systematic support to help them cope with completing applications for places at university. There is good liaison with the careers' service, which provides individuals with some relevant advice and support. Those following vocational courses gain much benefit from the work experience integral to their courses, because as well as contributing to their curriculum it broadens their grasp of possible career pathways. However, insufficient is done to foster the understanding and aspirations of other students about the breadth of career opportunities open to them. The majority of students expressing an opinion are satisfied with the careers' guidance programme but a significant minority have reservations about it.

45. The pastoral system is geared to respond effectively to any personal problems that students experience, including any deterioration in attitudes or behaviour. Students' high motivation to meet their teachers' expectations means that unacceptable behaviour is rare and exclusion from the sixth form is almost unknown. Subject teachers keep satisfactory records of attendance in lessons. Good attention is given to monitoring attendance at work experience placements. Monitoring of attendance, within the sixth form as a whole, is less successful and is unsatisfactory; registers compiled at the morning and afternoon registration periods are sometimes by-passed by students who go straight to lessons, or perhaps choose to stay at home during a study period and sign in when they arrive later on. It is a long-winded process for staff to pull together information from the various different attendance records, so it is more difficult for them than it should be to pick out the occasional emerging pattern of absenteeism, or to complete their careful checks of the attendance of those eligible to claim Education Maintenance Allowance attendance bonus payments. However, attendance at lessons in each subject studied is reported to parents, and there is very good liaison with them about any problems with attendance or any other concern that is identified.
46. The headteacher and other staff recognise the importance of informing parents and responding to their views and preferences and are very successful in their efforts to do this. As at the previous inspection, they regularly use questionnaires to measure opinions of the provision, and they have now evolved strategies for obtaining a high rate of returns. Questionnaires circulated by the school together with the one provided by the inspection team indicate that both parents and students are very happy with most aspects of the school's provision, and have particular regard for the high expectations and skilled teaching that enables students to make good progress. Views of both parents and students on many other matters are very positive. A few feel that the distribution of the homework load is at times uneven. The college's leavers' survey in 2001 showed some dissatisfaction with the breadth of extra-curricular activities available. Inspectors agree that provision of enrichment activities is unsatisfactory at present, because the programme praised at the previous inspection has been discontinued, though the college now has plans to improve matters. Where generally held concerns emerge, the school does all it can to improve matters, for instance by recently allocating funds to improve the toilet accommodation.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### **Leadership and management**

47. The leadership and management provided in the sixth form are now very good. Development planning is very good and a clear educational direction has been established that suitably reflects the college's general aims and values. Governors have contributed very well to development of the sixth form, ratifying course developments and the move of sites. Funding is well apportioned and spending very well monitored. The very efficient bursar and excellent administrative staff help this. Professional development of staff is well handled and in special circumstances, for example specific training for the CISCO IT course, excellently handled. Performance management is very well done in the whole school and sixth form teachers are obviously part of this. Investors in People status means all staff are thoroughly involved in school and sixth form developments and the quality of their work recognised. The highly efficient removal and reestablishment of the entire contents of classrooms, during the present site changes, bears testament to this, as does the more technical rapid conversion of classrooms to ICT rooms with the associated

networking put in place by the school's own staff. The college also employs instructors to run vocational courses and has recognised the teaching qualities and expertise they have; some of the best teaching in the sixth form is from instructors. This is another indication of the very high regard the school has for equality of opportunity.

48. One significant development that has been made concerns the curriculum. There is an acceptance that hitherto the curriculum offered post-16 has not adequately met the needs of all students, especially those who have gained very modest GCSE results. Some of these students also have special educational needs. There has also been a desire to include more members of the local community, some of whom face quite acute social problems. The present curriculum now has more emphasis on vocational options that are deemed more relevant to specific cohorts of students. Further additions are planned to the vocational curriculum, which will further enhance the range of students included.
49. A specific challenge facing the sixth form is to further raise standards, especially for female students taking A-levels. For standards to rise further the arrangements for monitoring each student's performance need to be improved. Though much assessment data is collected, the setting of minimum target grades and regularly measuring performance against such targets is still developing. Newly acquired data analysis software should move this work on quickly.
50. The sixth form is expanding and this growth has presented problems. These have been acknowledged and the post-16 sector of the school will shortly be relocating into a designated site on the school campus. This relocation work has been meticulously planned and carried through. Teachers acknowledge that their concerns about disruption have not been borne out.
51. The sixth form brings in rather more money than it costs to run and uses this money well. It is inclusive and academic standards are average compared to all schools, and above average if compared with all sixth form providers: schools and colleges. Cost effectiveness is good.

## **Resources**

52. During the time of the inspection the school was re-organising the several sites it has. The sixth form, except for certain specialist accommodation, for example technology, is moving en bloc to a lower site, and younger pupils in that site now are moving to the upper site. This will undoubtedly lead to much better dedicated accommodation and resources for most post-16 work. At the time of inspection accommodation was satisfactory overall, resourcing good and staffing very good.
53. Provision of computers in the school is average and they are heavily used to provide for courses both pre and post-16. Parents and students commented this has sometimes caused difficulties but the inspection found machines were available before and after school and teachers allowed students use of spare machines whilst they were teaching classes in computer rooms. An efficient booking system also allows departments to book computer rooms as long as such use fits with schemes of work; they cannot book resources 'just in case'. The accommodation change will provide additional computers specifically for sixth form use, including private study. Other specialist accommodation and resources, for example for photography and technology, are very good. The school is also fortunate in having land and buildings suitable for horticulture and construction. Indeed the construction students are adept

at building accommodation for themselves and others. Accommodation and resourcing for physical education is satisfactory but lacks all weather sports facilities that students, with their diverse timetables, could make use of. A bid for New Opportunities Fund money to make such provision is currently being considered. Science accommodation and resourcing is mixed but satisfactory; it is overdue for refurbishment. Music accommodation and resourcing are excellent, far better than that seen in almost any other school. Students certainly use it very well as the very high standards attest to. Books in subject and principal libraries are insufficient to meet the needs of some subjects and fluctuating numbers of students aggravate this.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected fully and five more are reported on in some detail. Work in over seven other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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
Art and design	1	100	83	100	23	5.0	2.27
General studies	8	100	77	63	19	3.88	1.92
Mathematics	3	67	62	0	15	1.33	1.51
Other social sciences	0	-	74	-	11	-	1.47
Sociology	0	-	63	-	7	-	1.47

### *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
Art and design	13	100	96	100	46	9.69	6.57
Biology	13	92	88	23	34	5.38	5.25
Business studies	10	100	92	10	32	5.20	5.50
Chemistry	7	86	90	71	43	6.86	5.90
Media studies	20	100	93	60	31	7.1	5.53
Computer studies	4	100	86	25	23	6.00	4.62
Dance	3	33	89	-	39	0.67	5.53
English language	28	89	92	21	30	4.86	5.28
French	3	100	89	33	38	5.33	5.59
Full design and technology	9	100	91	22	30	5.56	5.38
Geography	21	95	92	48	38	6.0	5.74
History	10	100	88	20	35	5.20	5.45
Mathematics	24	100	87	79	43	8.50	5.80
Music	15	100	93	93	35	8.53	5.74
Other sciences	11	100	90	18	30	4.91	5.16
Other social studies	23	91	87	13	34	4.09	5.30
Physics	10	90	88	60	40	7.00	5.67
Sociology	6	83	86	-	35	4.0	5.32

Spanish	1	100	89	100	39	10.00	5.70
Sports/PE Studies	9	100	92	11	25	4.00	5.09
Art and design	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14.0	12.24
Business	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.33	10.45

***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	7	100	n/a	14	n/a	n/a	n/a
Engineering	6	100	n/a	33	n/a	n/a	n/a
Leisure and tourism	7	100	n/a	29	n/a	n/a	n/a

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and chemistry but physics and biology were briefly sampled. In physics, a popular A-level subject, examination results in 2001 were very good. In biology, which has increased in popularity, results were disappointing last summer and have been below average for the last three years. Predictions from the in-course monitoring indicate better achievement for this year. In both the lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory, one lesson including a good theoretical derivation and in the other the students showing good practical skills.

### MATHEMATICS

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

#### Strengths

- A-level results in recent years have been above national averages.
- Teaching is good.
- Relationships with students are very good.
- The department is very well managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students need to develop better independent working skills.
- A greater consistency in marking is needed.

54. The inspection covered the new AS and A2 modules offered by the school that enable students to study statistics, discrete mathematics, mechanics and pure mathematics, to gain further mathematics qualifications. Students resitting GCSE were not seen due to the illness of a member of staff.
55. The mathematics department generally does very well for its sixth form students. Apart from the A-level results in 2000, students have gained results consistently higher than the national average. Notably, in 2001, 79 per cent gained A and B grades; these very good results coincided with a significant increase in male students and a similar decrease in female students. Students do well in comparison with other subjects. The A-level results for 2001 represent excellent achievement. The AS-level results indicate satisfactory achievement, though these were provisional at the time of the inspection and there is no national data with which to compare them.
56. The standard of students' written and oral work in Year 13 is average. The quality of Year 12 students' work is generally in line with course expectations. Owing to recent timetable re-arrangements caused by unavoidable staffing changes it was not possible to see the Year 12 further mathematicians being taught. These five students spoke enthusiastically about their work in statistics, having built successfully upon their GCSE knowledge. Their explanation of a traffic flow problem demonstrated a good understanding of the binomial distribution. Overall students' achievement judged on the work seen in lessons and in their exercise books is satisfactory. Year 13 students' progress in lessons and homework is hindered by their lack of vital study skills and perseverance. They lack a sharpness of recall of some basic facts and are often unable or reluctant to deduce from first principles the information they require. Year 12 students are developing some interesting topics for their coursework, investigating bubbles, keep fit regimes and the making of toys for playgroups, to

demonstrate their newly established linear programming skills as part of their decision and discrete module. Many need further support from their teacher to improve or extend the quality of their constraints. In general, students' attitude to work is good as they listen well, ask questions to gain further understanding and enjoy the touches of teachers' humour.

57. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have modified their schemes of work effectively to meet the new demands of the new AS and A2 modules. Lessons are carefully planned with a clear structure. The use of 'show me boards', usually used with younger pupils as part of the numeracy strategy, are also used very effectively for quick-fire questions at the beginning of the lesson. However, teachers of Year 13 students are finding it necessary to spend time building students' confidence and go over work taught earlier to build upon a solid foundation of knowledge. Teachers' very good knowledge of mathematics and of their students enables them to think quickly and modify their approach when necessary to meet the needs of the students. The teachers give generously of their free time to help students and there is a danger that students are becoming reliant upon the teachers to do their thinking for them. The standard of marking classwork and homework is inconsistent and occasionally irregular and does not always attempt to raise standards of presentation or communication.
58. The newly appointed but experienced head of department manages the mathematics department very well. He is making the best use he can of staff qualified to teach sixth form students having lost two staff recently, one to a promotion elsewhere and one through illness. The head of department has introduced regular tests for Year 12 and Year 13 students. These enable staff to identify, promptly and effectively, any under-performance and provide supplementary work and/or teaching in order to support the students. This strategy shows the department's determination to ensure that students continue to make progress. Curriculum opportunities are good for AS and A2 students. The head of department is preparing to make AS mathematics available to a wider range of students and to enhance the opportunities for resit GCSE classes as from next September.

## CHEMISTRY

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

### Strengths

- Results have improved steadily for the last three years and in 2001 were well above average.
- Teachers have a very good relationship with the students and support them well.
- Good use is made of ICT.
- Clear targets are set for the students and work is regularly assessed against them.
- The subject is well led and there is a clear and well-timed work scheme.
- The subject is well resourced with a good range of equipment and textbooks.

### Areas for improvement

- More challenging and questioning during lessons could further stimulate all students.
- Some of the teaching rooms are too small for full-sized A-level groups.

59. The GCE A-level examination results have shown a steady improvement over the last three years and in 2001 they were well above average (although small numbers meant that the results were not statistically significant). The small group of students



gained a high percentage of A and B grades, with all students achieving at least a pass grade. There was no noticeable difference in the performance of male and female students.

60. The standard of work of the current Year 12 and 13 students is average or above and nearly all students appear to be doing well in relation to their GCSE results and the target grades they have been set. Students have good practical skills. In one Year 12 lesson, students were able to show a good understanding of the principles of oxidation and reduction and were able to apply these principles to the extraction of metals. In a Year 13 lesson students were able to explain ion exchange and how it could be used. There was also a significant amount of guidance towards preparation for the modular tests. Students enjoy their chemistry and are mostly able to apply knowledge quite well. Written work is generally done thoroughly and is well monitored by teachers.
61. Teaching is good. Teachers set clear objectives for their lessons and keep students well informed of the work planned for the immediate future. Students are able to approach teachers with any difficulties and are confident and secure in the belief that help will be willingly given. At times the pace of lessons is not brisk enough and students need more challenging questions about the work they are doing. Opportunities for the teacher to take a more active role and to use time for theoretical questions about the work in hand were missed during some practical sessions. There was a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in all lessons that was conducive to effective study. The very low drop-out rate from the subject is a tribute to the teaching and the student/teacher relations and all students on the present AS course are anticipating carrying on to A2. Students' work is marked and assessed regularly and their progress compared to target grades. Support and help is given as appropriate and this frequent monitoring is helping to ensure that students do their best.
62. Resources, including textbooks, are good. There is a good range of apparatus and teachers make good use of visual aids, including overhead projectors and ICT. Some of the teaching rooms are not adequate for A-level groups and this could be more significant in the future as the size of groups appears to be increasing. It is hoped that the planned re-organisation of the school buildings will alleviate this problem. Good ICT resources are available to students on the school intranet but the library provision seen was disappointingly short of background chemistry texts.
63. The department is well led and managed. The work schemes are clear and the timing of them fits in well with the modular course. There are good support materials for teachers. The three teachers co-operate regularly to discuss particular aspects of the course and the progress of students.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

No subjects in this area were a focus of the inspection. However, several subjects were visited that come under design and technology provision in the school. Year 13 product design was seen. Standards ranged from average to well above average. Students could discuss their design ideas well, justifying decisions and materials, and they had created models to help them test structures and mechanisms and help them overcome problems. Very effective use is made of computer-assisted design and manufacturing which is very well resourced. The hammock bed project is at undergraduate level, and neither the coffee table, nor the bin design, if completed, would be amiss as first term projects in a university product design module of work. However, students did demonstrate they had only basic skills on such machines as a jig-saw and router. This is not uncommon, even amongst

undergraduates, as students enter such courses from different routes but it is something that the school could tackle better with younger students. Evidence of first class computer-assisted design by students was on the wall and obvious on computer files where some students had progressed to animating their designs. The best of this was certainly undergraduate level too. Students following the new electronics course were doing well, could model circuits with appropriate software and even explain some logic, timer circuits and triggers. They are well into using Programmable Integrated Circuits (PIC chips) and several were writing instructions for them when seen. Teaching across this area is at least good and obviously often very good or standards would not be as they are.

## **BUSINESS**

The inspection covered three different courses. These were GNVQ (II) business, AVCE business and A-level business.

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

### **Strengths**

- Assessment procedures are very good and help to inform students of their progress.
- Retention rates on all courses are excellent.
- Many students are developing high levels of competency in the use of ICT.

### **Areas for improvement**

- In order to raise standards further, all students need more opportunities to do essay work and similar tasks that require written work in an extended form.
- Students need to be suitably challenged in all lessons.
- There is an inadequate range of business-related resources, including books, videos and CD-ROMs.

64. In 2001, standards achieved by GNVQ (II) students were below average. Though all seven students gained accreditation, only one gained better than a pass grade. However, these results represent very good achievement by the students concerned. Many started this course with very poor GCSE results and their GNVQ results were frequently better than those forecast. GNVQ (A) students also recorded standards that were below the national average. Their average point score of nine compares to a national average score of 10.45. All students following the course gained either pass or merit grades, though no distinctions were awarded. Though the overall results were below national standards, most students following this course gained better results than those predicted based on GCSE results, indicating that most students made good progress. A-level results for grades A to E were in line with national average results. Indeed, all students following the course gained at least an E grade, though comparatively few of the highest grades were awarded. Again, given their GCSE results, most students made good progress by doing better than predicted. As numbers entered for each course were small, no meaningful analysis based on gender can be undertaken, but a clear strength to emerge is retention rates. On all courses retention rates are excellent.

65. For present students, standards are below average for those following the GNVQ (II) course and the A/AS-level course, but AVCE students, especially in Year 13, are recording standards that are above average. Intermediate students are developing their basic knowledge and understanding of business, but are less good at applying their ideas. Similarly, A/AS-level students are developing their basic knowledge and understanding of business situations, but their ability to apply their knowledge to

specific situations is less well developed. Many students struggle with their understanding of economic theory and are not confident when required to apply such theory to specific situations such as deregulation. Students on the AVCE course have many competencies. Year 13 students are especially capable in the use and application of ICT to business situations. The quality of their work is frequently of a very high standard. Year 12 students also record good standards, but for these to be maintained, they must ensure that all work is completed on time. Again, no discernible differences exist in the work of male and female students and most students are progressing well given their performances at GCSE.

66. The quality of teaching is good and is having a good effect on learning. All lessons seen were of at least a satisfactory standard, and some were good, or very good. Where learning is most encouraged by effective teaching, a number of strengths can be identified. Planning is very good and the students are presented with challenges which enhance their learning. For example, some very effective teaching was seen with the Year 13 AVCE group. The students had been set small research projects, which required them to compile reports on the use of tools such as email and databases in businesses. Each student was required to make a presentation to the rest of the group of their findings using ICT. The standard of these reports was very high. Each student showed very good knowledge of their research topic; all were very competent users of ICT and the planning of the task by the teacher offered students significant opportunities to develop their presentational skills. In a minority of instances the pace was slower and the lessons were too teacher-centred. In a Year 13 A-level lesson on government policy, learning was satisfactory, but opportunities for students to undertake their own research were not seized. As a result, though some interesting discussion occurred, some students were passive and the learning of the whole class relied too much on the information offered by their teacher. Lesson monitoring needs to ensure that suitable challenges are offered in all lessons. In some other cases, the pace of learning was constrained because of the unsuitable teaching accommodation, no computers were available and opportunities for individual work were severely constrained. The department is in the process of being relocated and, when this happens, the problem of access to ICT equipment should be resolved.
67. The leadership and management of the department are good. Students enjoy business studies and welcome the flexible and informal learning environment that has been established. Such flexibility helps the department to be inclusive and is a key feature that accounts for the excellent retention rates recorded. Another strength of the department is the very good and detailed assessment procedures that exist. All students know where they stand and what they must do in order to improve their work. Good contributions are also made to key skills, especially ICT and numeracy, and students are offered opportunities to develop other skills such as research and analysis as well as being offered opportunities to undertake presentations. For standards to improve further, however, more emphasis needs to be placed on developing literacy skills, especially writing. Work samples seen suggested that more attention should be placed on essay work, for example. The department is soon to be relocated, as is the sixth form library. When these moves are completed, a review of resources should be undertaken to ensure that students have sufficient access to a variety of sources of information to help them develop their research skills. At present access to a variety of research media is limited. Business education did not feature in any detail in the previous report so comments on improvement cannot be made. However, the department is presently doing much good work and it has much potential to develop further.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

## COMPUTING, ICT AND CISCO CERTIFIED NETWORK ASSOCIATE

Overall, the quality of provision in all post-16 computer related courses is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is at least very good overall and excellent in computing.
- Management is excellent.
- Innovation in course development is excellent.
- Resources are excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- Students should be given more opportunities to manage school systems and support ICT development for younger pupils and possibly staff.
- Students' options need better vetting to avoid potentially undesirable overlap of related courses.

68. The focus was primarily on A-level computing. However, the college now offers two other courses, A-level ICT and CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA). The former is a little broader than computing and perhaps offers better entry prospects for those students not set on technical careers in ICT; the CISCO course is innovative, particularly in a school setting, and is industry standard. It is internationally recognised and offers rapid entry into employment; CISCO accredited engineers are sought after. Work in Year 12 ICT is well up to course expectations, and standards, of the small amount of work seen, ranged from average to well above average. Students were engaged in creating spreadsheets to perform various functions for local businesses. All could design working spreadsheets with user-friendly front ends so calculations were performed in the background and prompts for data were clear. The seven students had a wide range of ability when they started the course, some having taken GCSE IT and others not. Some have gained related skills through their own work at home or through part-time work. Though this range of experience is still apparent in the quality and complexity of students' current work, very good teaching that obviously monitors and supports students' achievements means all make good progress. Particularly impressive was the range of projects underpinning the work. These ranged from stock control at the local herb farm, ordering prompts for the local pasty shop, through Helston football club, several newsagents, to better management of information at a local, but national, call centre for veterinary surgeons. It is obvious students have been encouraged to identify real problems and that their solutions, well on the way to success, will benefit the community in a variety of ways.
69. The CISCO course is remarkable: two teachers had to embark on rigorous training and testing before they were allowed to teach it; it requires particular laboratory and technical support; assessment and coursework is on-line and if a student fails to achieve sufficiently highly, the course has to be repeated. Teaching is excellent and the IT manager has ensured that students have an excellent back up to on-line work through a department handbook and four teacher-designed school intranet-based tests, which allow pupils to identify weaknesses before they face the California-based tests. Students are highly motivated and are rapidly acquiring appropriate knowledge in, for example, binary and decimal notation, network protocols, and practical cabling and networking techniques. Some students are following both this course and A-level computing. This is reasonable as CISCO is a new and desirable additional qualification rather than, as yet, a recognised course for university entrance. However,

as ICT courses hopefully gain in popularity, students who opt for several related courses should be better vetted to see whether their choices are appropriate.

70. Standards in computing in 2001 were, overall, well above average, though the small number of school entries makes such comparisons not very useful. Standards of current work are variable but above average and students are achieving and learning very well. Both their own excellent attitudes and the excellent teaching they receive foster this.
71. An excellent Year 13 lesson about networking topologies led students to logically deduce the requirements underpinning sending packets of information including addressing and checking procedures. It was obvious they know about, and understand, algorithms and ASCII coding, for example. Excellent question and answer technique by the teacher, backed up by a very well prepared computer projected set of notes, enabled students to gain considerable understanding about data transmission protocols like TCP/IP. Homework, about routers, was relevant and a little challenging as it was likely to involve some Internet research or at least polite conversation with one of the technicians. One student is also taking CISCO and was obviously ahead of the game in this lesson, though the reinforcement would obviously help in both courses. Such dual enrolment is commented on above. A very good Year 12 lesson used a very well prepared *PowerPoint* presentation to continue work on data structures. Revision points on hexadecimal code were very well made and pseudo code was well explained by the teacher. This was followed by one of several exercises built into the presentation and students were very well challenged. The almost instant feedback of optimum answers to the coding problems was well discussed and students learnt very well. Students needed a little prompting to explain 16-bit memory and stack memory but all were suitably adept at hexadecimal. The teacher's very good relationships with students helped things along; he has very high expectations and students know this. Students maintained interest and concentration for 50 minutes but a few more changes in the presentation, perhaps one or two video clips, would have lifted it and made the work a little more accessible.
72. Leadership and management of the whole IT area are excellent and computing is the forte of the leader. Resources and teaching have obviously been well honed over a number of years. Almost all presentations are made available to students over the school intranet and exercises are there too. Consequently, students are able to revise and refresh their lessons and revisit old problems or try new ones. The manager is now exploring AVCE IT courses as a natural progression to GNVQ in Years 10 and 11. ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection and is poised to improve much further due to the team in place, including excellent technical support, and excellent and obviously innovative management. A school issue that could be helped by ICT is increasing opportunities for students to undertake personal development and work-related activities; ICT students could certainly be involved more in developing ICT lower down the school, managing ICT rooms and providing in-service training for adults.

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

The focus was on physical education but GNVQ (I) leisure and tourism was also sampled. Standards of work in the latter are below average, but are in line with expectations given the students' GCSE results. In the one lesson seen teaching and learning were good, but standards suffer because of a lack of specialist accommodation.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Strengths**

- Students achieve well; practical performance is good and their understanding of concepts is sound.
- The teaching of AS and A-level physical education is good; expectations are high and students are challenged.
- Relationships are very good; students share ideas freely and work well together.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The proportion of students gaining the highest grades, A and B, is below average.
- Opportunities for additional development are limited, due to the lack of opportunities outside lessons.
- Less capable students show weaknesses in their understanding of key theoretical aspects.

73. GCE A-level physical education results in 2001, although below the national average, represented good achievement for most students. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade (A-E), but the proportion obtaining a higher grade pass (A or B) was low. Very few students failed to complete the course. The 2000 A-level results were in line with the national average.
74. A high proportion of current Year 13 students are producing work that is in line with national expectations. A significant minority are above average. Within a wide ability range, most students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In lessons they are doing well as a result of effective teaching which demands much of them; for example, in one lesson, students had to compare the organisation of sport in different countries by drawing on their knowledge and through researching various text sources. Students' practical performance levels are good and many are achieving well at local, county and sometimes, national levels. Students' written work is generally well presented; they frequently access the Internet to research information and most make good use of ICT to enhance their presentation of coursework. For example, students' use graphics well to summarise reaction test findings. Lower attaining students show a limited understanding of some key theoretical aspects, for example, psychological concepts.
75. Students in Year 12, within a wide ability range, are achieving much as expected. The few higher attaining students have developed well their analysis and evaluation of determinants of skilled performance. Most students organise and present information in a clear and appropriate form. In a lesson investigating the transfer of skills, students used sound numeracy skills to measure, record and analyse test results. They understand the various graphical ways of summarising information and are confident in their use of technical language. However, those students with modest GCSE results are finding the course difficult; they show an understanding of theoretical principles and concepts that is too superficial for this level.
76. The teaching of AS and A-level physical education is good; students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, good knowledge and high expectations. Students are helped to refine their work through teacher-set targets. Students are improving their independent learning skills because teachers often provide opportunities for them to plan, research and evaluate work. Good use is made of available resources, but teaching and learning lack the enhancement of specialist accommodation for fitness testing and training.

77. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic about physical education. Their learning benefits from well-informed and supportive teaching. Most students express themselves clearly in discussion, for example, in comparative work on the organisation of sport in Australia, and in Britain. Most students are confident in using books and ICT to extract information.
78. The subject is well led and managed. There is a commitment to further improve standards. Target setting is well monitored and A-level examination results are carefully analysed. Overall, accommodation for the subject is in need of updating; the school is currently exploring potential sources of major funding to remedy this situation.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on three subjects: art and design, music and music technology, but dance and photography were also sampled. Few students follow the course in dance, which is a little surprising as it is very popular amongst girls in Years 10 and 11 and high standards are reached then. A-level results were low in 2001. In the one lesson seen, teaching and learning were good, but standards suffer because of a lack of specialist accommodation. Standards in photography are excellent and students benefit from excellent teaching. Photography is seen principally as an art and students enjoy wet processing; there is scope to consider, further, digital photography and editing and links with business.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Results in 2001 were well above average.
- Teaching is very good and sensitive support leads to clear improvements in students' work.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very strong and result in high motivation.
- Students learn to think and develop for themselves.
- The subject is very well led.

### Areas for improvement

- Less capable Year 12 AVCE students have difficulty in analysis and evaluation.
- ICT needs to be further utilised in schemes of work.

79. The GCE A-level examination results for 2001 were well above average. Five out of six students passed at the highest level. One student achieved grade B. Results for art and design GNVQ were also well above average; eight out of nine students achieved either a distinction or a merit. AS-level results are also high with eight students achieving grade A and one student grade B. Very few students failed to complete courses. Students' achievement was very good.

80. Standards of work are well above average. In the Year 13 A-level group, students are continuing to build very well on both GCSE and AS results. For example, students are producing a contextual study showing a high degree of skill in the use of synthetic paint or pastel crayon. Students show very good awareness of the mood and genre necessary to bring their work alive. All have good subject knowledge and can refer to artistic movements and artists' specific works when discussing their own. They have a very good grasp of their own strengths and the areas in which they need to improve to achieve at the highest level. Students following the AVCE course in Year 13 are very confident and have a good understanding of the concept of design. They are using this process very well and by completing extensive material research, initial ideas are showing many good features for the future development of their garden artefacts.
81. Students following the Year 12 AVCE course are now beginning produce work that is above average. An early graphics project shows students were then working appropriately compared to their GCSE results, which indicate a broad ability range. A small number of students show difficulty in the identification and analysis of information through research and cannot evaluate their own and others' work well enough. Teachers have responded to these weaknesses and are, through focused support in current work, improving these skills. All students in this group are now showing good imaginative manipulation of images in their textiles work, and sketchbooks are being used very effectively to collect and collate both natural and man-made images. The contextual study of textile designers is likely to further complement and develop students' understanding.
82. Teaching is very good overall; most students are helped to develop very good independent learning skills. Teachers intervene and support students when necessary but they do it very well and very carefully; students are inspired to improve their work and develop creativity. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which is constantly evident through their discussion with students and the many demonstrations offered during the course of each lesson. In a Year 13 class, where students are developing a European Garden, a challenging group debate, led by intermittent but astute comments from the teacher, led to high quality planning for the future work of all students. Teachers have high expectations both of themselves and of their students. A good range of exemplar materials is used very effectively to guide students in their thinking, technique and style of work. Two lessons were good, rather than very good, as insufficient focus at both the start and end led to a slow start in learning and very little opportunity to share and review the good work produced during the session.
83. Students learn very well. They give full attention to their teachers during exposition and demonstrations and share, speak and listen attentively to each other's opinions and thoughts through the course of most lessons. Teachers and students get on very well together, resulting in motivated, independent and responsible learners. Year 13 students are very confident in their ability to make art and design artefacts. Their contextual studies show a very good grounding in research technique, which is now being used very effectively for their final compositions. Year 12 students are also showing confidence in their work, which in turn is helping them make good progress in improving their skills and techniques.
84. The curriculum is very appropriate and offers a well-balanced programme in both Years 12 and 13. ICT is not used very much within schemes of work or as a medium. By developing both fine art and vocational art pathways the department ensures most students can continue on to higher education or find a position in employment in the



locality. Over recent years the department has established an excellent record in preparing students for these destinations.

85. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers are well organised and fully prepared for their teaching with a good range of materials and resources at their disposal. The recent change in location of classrooms has created many difficulties for both staff and students. Both have made excellent progress in settling into their new accommodation, which does provide very good facilities. However, a separate preparation area that meets with appropriate health and safety regulations needs to be established. There is good technical support that is used very effectively in supporting all aspects of the department's work.
86. There has been very good progress during the last six years. There is now a broad approach to art and design and the results students achieve are now consistently very high. The head of department recognises that insufficient male students are attracted to the courses on offer and is considering future options available to address this.

## MUSIC AND MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Students have high levels of practical skills, understanding and knowledge which support their development as musicians.
- Teaching, which is consistently very good and often excellent, promotes very good learning and well above average attainment.
- Students' opportunities are enhanced by the inter-action of both courses, an impressive enrichment programme and outstanding facilities and resources.
- Students' positive and mature attitudes, good levels of independent learning and mutual support, contribute strongly to their very good achievement.
- Examination results are excellent.

### Areas for improvement

None

87. Examination results at A-level and AS-level in both music and music technology are consistently very high. The majority of students gain A and B grades, which are well above average, maintaining the high standard set by their prior GCSE results. Retention rates are high and a number of students transfer from other schools because of the excellent quality of provision. Some students enter Year 12 without a GCSE pass in music, although normally with good performing and music reading skills. They receive additional help in areas where it is most needed.
88. The attainment levels of current students are well above average and they are likely to meet the very demanding targets set for them. Most students are competent and confident performers, who have already attained grade 7 or 8 in the practical examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. They have considerable performance experience, in school and county ensembles and in the wider community. They read music fluently and most can follow musical scores well. Their composing, sequencing and arranging show that they have creative and imaginative ideas, often in response to a set stimulus. They are developing well the technical facility to realise their composing intentions in logical, well-organised

structures, producing music which is attractive to listen to. Their attention to the conventions of voice and instruments is idiomatic. As yet, few of them are confident in using elements of the quality of sound, such as dynamics, phrasing or articulation, as key aspects of their creative work.

89. Students of the music technology course are producing good sequencing and attractive recordings, sometimes of professional standard. Their manipulation of a wide range of complex technical equipment and its impact on their musical judgements are impressive. Some students are already working in recording and balancing with performers outside the college. While their very good achievement in these areas is enhanced by their prior experience as performing and composing musicians, almost all of the technical requirements of the music technology course are completely new to them at the beginning of Year 12.
90. Students in both years are developing good levels of contextual knowledge. They have good analytical listening skills. They can apply these and their growing knowledge of musical repertoire to understand the complex processes of composition and performance in different styles of music and across historical periods. They quickly appreciate the links between music, the other arts and social and political issues. Most written work is thoughtful and well presented. Some students are not yet sufficiently experienced to direct their knowledge in answer to the focus required by a particular question. Some of them still provide description rather than analysis or are reticent to present reasons or musical illustrations to support their opinions. They receive very good informative and detailed written feedback in these areas. They also have useful opportunities for oral presentations, discussion and evaluation which support the development of their critical judgement.
91. Teaching is always very good and often excellent. Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge and a very high level of skills, and lessons are dynamic. They present the students with a fine role model. Students learn well because they are challenged strongly and are expected to do a great deal of independent learning. Constant pressure is placed on them to improve their standards by rigorous questioning and critical assessment. Most of the students respond positively to the demands placed on them. They identify this aspect of their learning as one of the significant factors promoting their achievement. Students are well supported by their teachers, for example in individual lessons in composition or technology. Students have confidence in their teachers and are aware that they are fortunate to have such generous levels of expert guidance.
92. Students benefit considerably from the inter-action between the two courses and this produces excellent levels of mutual support and co-operation. Music technology students help music students with computer problems and recording opportunities. Music students provide performances for recording practice and help with instrumental technique. Practical collaboration contributes strongly to the professional feel of the subject and is recognised by the students as an important part of their training.
93. Students gain greatly from a comprehensive enrichment programme of free instrumental lessons and ensemble coaching. The standard of teaching from visiting specialists is very high. These additional opportunities contribute much to students' achievement and provide significant experience in taking responsibility, for example, in helping to organise rehearsals and performances and in supporting the contributions of younger pupils. Students initiate their own music making and receive every encouragement from the school. Since the last inspection, impressive purpose-built

accommodation with state-of-the-art learning resources has enhanced provision in the subject. Students cite the enrichment programme and their access to study resources, such as instruments, computers, the recording studio, scores and reference material, as important factors in their development in the subject.

94. Leadership is outstanding. There is shared commitment to continual improvement and the promotion of initiatives which will benefit the students' development. The management and administration of a large and complex department are efficient and dynamic, which ensures that time and resources are used effectively to provide very good quality of learning.

## HUMANITIES

History, geography, law, psychology and sociology were inspected.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Above average A-level results for the higher grades.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge which challenges students.
- Students' very good attitudes which contribute to good learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Emphasis on the cross-curricular links of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Opportunities for independent learning.

95. The 2001 A-level results in geography are in line with the national average for the proportion of students gaining a pass grade. The proportion gaining grades in the A-B band is above the national average with an improving trend since 1998 when results were below average. In AS-level 33 per cent of students gained A-B grades while 88 per cent gained pass grades. Forty-three per cent of these candidates have decided to resit the examination. There has been no overall trend in differences between the attainment of male and female students. Few students have dropped out of either course, and five joined the AS course late from other courses.
96. Observation of lessons and analysis of work samples confirm that the standards attained by students at both AS and A2 levels are above average, as was reported at the time of the last inspection. Since the students started the courses with above average GCSE results these standards represent satisfactory achievement.
97. Year 13 students can discuss and explain issues such as pro-natalist and anti-natalist theories of population control using correct vocabulary and drawing well-informed conclusions. Year 12 students constructed and interpreted climate graphs effectively in a challenging time-limited situation, though the weaker students did not complete the work. They were able to quickly assimilate knowledge about factors affecting the weather and climate of the British Isles. Students of all levels of attainment have well-organised folders of notes and essays which show a good understanding of the topics and a clear structure for revision. Almost no photocopied material is used. One commendable piece of work about flooding in a local river was presented in *PowerPoint* on a laptop computer.

98. No students with special educational needs, or gifted and talented students, were identified during observations. In one lesson, mixed discussion groups catered for students of differing levels of attainment.
99. The quality of teaching and related learning is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and there was some very good teaching. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding enable them to challenge students and widen their knowledge through discussion. High expectations and good use of resources mean that the higher attaining students make good progress and lower attaining students are generally provided with work appropriate to their level of understanding. Teachers manage time and pupils well in what are comparatively short lessons for sixth form work. Students' very good attitudes mean that they remain well focused throughout the lesson and they listen well. Teachers use resources well, enlivening lessons with *PowerPoint* and video presentations. In a lesson about earthquake geomorphology, students had to identify primary and secondary damage after the Kobe earthquake, by watching a video, which taught them to think for themselves. However, on some occasions, information was spoon fed, with too much teacher talk and too little student activity, which denied opportunities for independent learning. The quality of relationships in the classroom means that all students are well known to teachers, who track individual progress. Individual support is available for all students, sometimes through one-to-one tutorials, sometimes by email. Homework is set regularly and is always a part of the programme of study.
100. The head of department leads a talented and committed team. Resources are very good, with a developing departmental resource facility and library for sixth form use. There is good use of ICT. Accommodation is in the process of being improved. Curriculum provision is good, with much work going into developing schemes of work based on the new syllabuses. However, these schemes of work currently do not illustrate opportunities to emphasise spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Fieldwork provision is adequate but the personal development of students would be better supported if they all had more opportunities for residential fieldwork trips. The good standards commented on in the previous inspection have been maintained and the department is well placed to improve further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge which enables them to challenge students.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject which engages students' interest.
- Students' very good attitudes which contribute to good learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Results at AS and A2 level.
- Numbers choosing to study the subject.

101. The 2001 A-level results in history were in line with the national average for the proportion of students achieving a pass grade. The proportion of students achieving a grade in the A-B band was below the national average but this was a very small group. In previous years this proportion has been broadly in line with the national average but there has been no improvement over the last three years. The first set of

AS-level results show a 96 per cent pass rate and 26 per cent of candidates in the A-B band. There have been no significant differences between the attainment of male and female students, except for 2001 when females did far better than males. Few students have dropped out of the courses since September 2001.

102. The standards of attainment in students' work and in lessons are average in both Year 12 and Year 13 and achievement is satisfactory overall.
103. Year 13 students analyse historical sources critically and can evaluate evidence without bias, as in a lesson about Far Eastern politics before World War 2. Year 12 students discussing the trial of Strafford by the Long Parliament showed good understanding of the state of political attitudes at the time. Written work of both year groups expresses ideas coherently and students are very skilled note takers. Higher attaining students have well-organised folders of notes, essays and document analyses that will be an asset in examination revision. Notes show a commitment to additional reading and Internet research. The work of lower attaining students shows an over-reliance on photocopied notes and underdeveloped analytical skills. Students show interest in and enthusiasm for the subject and enjoy their studies. No students with special educational needs, or gifted and talented students, were identified during the inspection. However, in one lesson, being allocated to mixed discussion groups catered for students of differing levels of attainment.
104. The quality of teaching and related learning is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and there was some very good teaching. Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding are inspirational to many of the students. High expectations lead students to work hard. Time is well used; lessons proceed at a very brisk pace but some over-optimistic planning means that time runs out before the lesson is complete, which means that learning is not consolidated. Students learn best when they are given group tasks to research and discuss amongst themselves, as in the Year 12 group acting out the issues surrounding the trial of Strafford. Too often, however, they are allowed to be passive learners. They show a preference for listening rather than expressing their own ideas and the teachers encourage this, spending a lot of time talking so that students do not have enough opportunity to question and hypothesise.
105. The head of department leads a team of committed enthusiasts. A lot of work has gone into rewriting schemes of work to meet new syllabus requirements and these are being continually modified in the light of student progress. Resources are adequate and a sixth form departmental library is being developed. The department has maintained its standards since the previous inspection; accommodation issues criticised then are in the process of being improved. Because of the commitment of the teaching staff the department has a good capacity for future improvement.

## LAW

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and stimulates students' interest.
- Internet research extends students' knowledge of legal practice.
- Logically argued cases that reach a conclusion are used effectively to help learning.
- Analysis of evidence, examination for inter-relationships and possible correlations, is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Wider range of prison visits/visits to courts.
- Student participation in class discussion or debate.
- Punctuality/submission of students' work.
- Quality of legal language and literacy development via keywords/glossary.

106. The standard of work in Year 12 and 13 is, overall, above average. These standards are reached because teaching is good. Students' attitudes and their ability to communicate effectively and confidently contribute to them providing clear descriptions of legal reasoning which supports their progress. Coherent and well-balanced reports and essays reflect good progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Achievement overall is good. Retention rates in both years are good.
107. A GCSE in law has recently started and has attracted a good number of keen pupils. The teaching is very good and it is directed to developing an understanding of the law in theory and in practice. This is aimed at developing an interest and enjoyment of studying law. Pupils are being shown the importance of problem solving through casework. This knowledge is providing a sound base for further study.
108. The standards reached in Year 12 are above average. Students have knowledge of legal concepts and they are able to appreciate the importance of case law in the study of law. Most students show an interest in legal issues and they have positive attitudes to legal reasoning. Students listen carefully to the teacher and to each other as legal arguments are held. They answer questions willingly using legal terms. The written work produced by most students is well presented and students concentrate hard, even when the work is demanding. The teacher reminds students of deadlines and what has to be completed to meet targets. Students are gaining an understanding of the moral and ethical issues in society through consideration of legal principles, rules and sanctions and how these are affected by changing morality and values in society.
109. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students are making progress in their studies of the law. They show initiative and plan their work without direct supervision. All students respond positively to suggestions for improving their work. A majority of homework tasks are completed conscientiously. There are clear expectations for higher attaining students and extended tasks are provided. Students are gaining good knowledge of legal processes and they are able to identify the leading legal arguments in both civil and criminal law. The higher attaining students understand the importance of an organised defence against charges brought against the person. Students appreciate the need for clear and effective legal communication. Oral presentations of legal arguments are good and develop students' self-confidence of speaking publicly. The teacher always recapitulates what students have learnt. All classroom exercises test students' knowledge and understanding.
110. Examination results were, overall, average at the end of Years 12 and 13 last year; the average points score for all students taking AS/A2 courses was satisfactory but below the national average. The proportion of top grades attained is below average. Male and female students perform equally well. High expectations are communicated to all students. There is value added in the grades obtained when compared to students' previous levels of performance.
111. The quality of teaching is good. Expectations of the level of work and students' commitment to law are high. There is a good productive working atmosphere surrounding the course. The teacher has a good knowledge of law and uses legal specific vocabulary correctly. Students are some way behind in terms of prudentia (judgement) and autoritas (authority) but they are learning. The teacher explains

lesson objectives to students and they understand what targets are being addressed. Lessons are well structured. Law is a living discipline and so relevant media information and debates are pointed out to students. A variety of activities is used so that pace and momentum are maintained. The teacher actively teaches the whole class or groups throughout lessons. Teaching communicates an interest in, and enthusiasm for, the subject. How well students are doing is determined by the quality of their work when completed. The texts used are the most effective available and allow for students of different ability. The teacher also gives students individual help when needed.

112. Leadership and management are good. The subject teacher gives students strong support covering the English legal system or the main areas of substantive law. This makes students feel confident and answers their doubts about their own ability. Law as a subject has clear aims and these are relevant to their stated purpose. The teacher looks to raise all forms of student achievement. Law is taught as a socially inclusive discipline. Lessons often take the form of a workshop with students working individually on their own initiative. The library offers good support but legal textbooks quickly date.
113. Good improvement, over time, has been made to aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. Students are provided with a good basis of legal facts and students are supported to learn their material thoroughly. The quality of legal writing is assessed accurately. The teacher organises relevant legal information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate. The teacher is effective as a facilitator who helps and assists students to overcome problems, helps to address areas of weakness and offers suggestions for improvement. Learning objectives are always explained to students. The language used is lively and jargon-free. Lessons contain a wealth of illustrative cases, specimen documents and extra investigative assignments which help to bring law to life.

## PSYCHOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and there are high expectations of students' performance.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good.
- The behaviour and attitudes of students are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of ICT in lessons.
- The start and end of lessons are not planned well enough.

114. Standards of work seen during the inspection are just above average. Students come to Year 12 with little experience of psychology and achieve well because teaching is good. Standards are average or just above average by the end of Year 13. Students' attitudes, the quality of the teaching and activities matched to students' needs cause the quality of students' learning in psychology to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. Retention rates in both years are good.
115. Students in Year 12, at the start of their course, make a good commencement to their study of psychology. They produce promising essays and research reports. The work on behaviour and memory showed good research skills, clear understanding and a

good balance of explanation. Students produce good worksheets on designing psychological experiments. CD-ROMs and the Internet provide many opportunities to develop ICT skills in the context of studying psychology. Students are expected to explore and develop search skills and to extract useful information using electronic sources. The average attainers are less confident about their writing and use more description than necessary. The scientific style and logical structure of reports are substantially evident with a satisfactory range of specialist terms. For example, students argued intelligently about the links between variations in childcare related to children's development. There is an adequate expression of ideas and adequate grammar but many minor errors. These errors require correction. In a lesson on research skills students conducted a lively discussion although occasionally their expression is variable. Specialist vocabulary such as 'hypothesis', and 'directional/non-directional' is insufficiently polished to allow all students to organise their writing clearly and coherently. Females are more able at writing than males.

116. Students in Year 13 achieve above or close to their predicted grades. Recent A2 grades have been below average for the A-B grades but above average for the whole grade range. In the past results have been above average for all grades. While results vary over time each year, the results obtained are better than previous attainment indicates. Females out-perform males. Learning is good because they are prepared to question their teacher and the research material provided for them, or to question their own searches. A Year 13 lesson, on the revision of the basics of operant conditioning, balanced formal teaching and student discussion. In a lesson on behaviour they demonstrated good knowledge and an awareness of the ethical issues attached to psychology. They are able to build on and extend their previous knowledge and several lessons provide an opportunity to develop their understanding of both short-term and long-term memory. Students understand the nature and usage of experimentation (laboratory) methods with its advantages and weaknesses and how it relates to the scientific nature of psychology.
117. Teaching is good in both Years 12 and 13. Students enjoy their learning. In the successful lessons teachers lead but ensure that students contribute as much as they might. Teaching is pitched appropriately to engage and challenge students of varying abilities. Methods vary to meet the learning needs of different students or the different demands of aspects of the psychology course. The teaching of key skills is satisfactory and enhances the skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation. Teaching is good because of the good relationships established by the teachers along with well-structured lessons and a very strong focus on the lesson objectives. Teachers could spend more time at the end of lessons reviewing what had been learnt. Teachers have good management skills, establish good relationships with students and make good use of resources. Teachers in psychology are aware of students' achievement targets and take account of them in their planning and teaching, for example, in their design of psychological investigations and the use of well-constructed student discussion.
118. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of what has to be done to further improve standards. There is appropriate curricular planning to ensure that courses run smoothly. There is effective monitoring of teaching and action is taken when necessary. Students are now encouraged to research issues outside lessons on the Internet but better use of it in lessons is also needed. Relevant, useful television programmes, for example 'Human Zoo', are recorded for classroom use and a comprehensive back catalogue of videos has been developed. Library resources are well used, but limited in range and do not cover all aspects of psychology.



## SOCIOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge, which informs lively discussion.
- Relationships in the classroom which give students the confidence to deal with challenging ideas.
- Students' very good attitudes which contribute to good learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Examination results at AS and A2 level.
- Few students choose to study the subject.

119. The 2001 A-level results in sociology were below the national average for the proportion of students achieving a pass grade. No students achieved a grade in the A-B band. This pattern has not changed over the last four years. However, the department accepts students with only one GCSE pass, who have no previous experience of sociology, so these results represent good achievement for many of them. AS-level results show an improvement on the A-level with 12 per cent of the group gaining passes at grade B. There have been no significant differences between the attainment of males and females, though most opting for the course are females. Since September 2001, four students have dropped out from an already small AS group; consequently the retention rate is unsatisfactory and it is an indication that students have been accepted onto the course who should not have been.
120. Standards of work are average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This is better than indicated by past examination results because teachers are constantly refining their interpretation of the new AS and A2 syllabuses in the light of students' responses. Higher attaining students have commendable and well-organised folders of notes and essays which will be an asset in examination revision. Lower attaining students show less ability to develop themes or to write at length.
121. Year 13 students have a sound understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. They can discuss and explain issues such as consensus and conflict theories of social control using correct vocabulary and referring to the exponents of opposing views such as Marx and Durkheim. They are well advanced in carrying out their own pieces of research for the coursework and understand how to collect, analyse and present data. Year 12 students already have a good understanding of sociological theory as it relates to structures such as the family and education, and are learning the skills of sampling and questionnaire design. All students show interest in and enthusiasm for the subject and value the insights it gives them into society. No students with special educational needs, or gifted and talented students, were identified during observations.
122. The quality of teaching and related learning is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and there was some very good teaching. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding enable them to widen students' knowledge through discussion and their high expectations lead students to produce their best work. Lessons proceed at a very brisk pace which keeps students' attention focused. Teachers manage time and pupils well in what are comparatively short lessons for sixth form work. For example, in a Year 13 lesson where students were all working individually at different stages of their coursework, the teacher was able to assist two who were working in

another room on computers, revise some relevant theoretical points with another two and give one-to-one attention to others. The quality of relationships in the classroom means that potentially difficult themes such as population control, race and divorce can be tackled with frankness and good humour. Homework is well used to extend the learning in the classroom. Literacy is well developed through key vocabulary but opportunities are missed to use the subject's reliance on statistics to extend numeracy.

123. The department is well led by the teacher in charge of sociology. New schemes of work have been produced to meet the requirements of the new syllabuses. Resources are adequate but the subject library held by the department is not well enough equipped to meet the needs of all the students. Computer access is inadequate for a subject that now relies on computers for analyses of data and up-to-date Internet research. However, this should be improved once the current re-organisation of accommodation is complete. The subject was not reported on at the time of the previous inspection but indications from the AS-level results suggest that standards are improving. Numbers of students opting for the subject are low and strategies are needed to raise its popularity as well as to ensure continuing improvement in attainment.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The focus was on NVQ courses in construction and horticulture, but lessons in a number of other vocational areas were sampled, including business administration and childcare. In every instance teaching was at least good and the variety of courses offered is enabling a range of students, including some adult learners, to gain qualifications. The extent of vocational options available characterises the college's commitment to inclusion.

### Vocational Education

Overall, the quality of provision in construction and horticulture is **excellent**.

#### Strengths

- All students, including some with special educational needs, learn very well because of their excellent, enthusiastic and committed teachers.
- The courses offered promote a high degree of social inclusion.
- The courses make a significant contribution to developing key skills.
- Opportunities for progression to employment or further education are excellent.

#### Areas for improvement

- The variety of work undertaken needs to be made known better to the rest of the college so that cross-curricular partnerships can be developed.

124. Both courses have only recently been introduced into the college's curriculum. All students enrol with very modest GCSE results and some have special educational needs. During their courses, their standards of work improve considerably; all make at least very good progress. Moreover, all students are gaining in confidence, are developing their social skills and are significantly improving their prospects to gain employment, or to further their education. Both courses are making a profound contribution to social inclusion. If these courses were not provided the students would suffer, as there are few other suitable opportunities available in the locality.

125. The quality of teaching offered is excellent. The careful, thoughtful and well-planned teaching makes a significant contribution to the excellent quality of learning. Teaching is challenging and is characterised by high expectations and high standards. All students are gaining a wealth of practical experiences. Horticulture students, for example, have created a number of gardens and are presently working on a garden project based on a map of Cornwall. Construction students have recently built an extension to their base and during the inspection were involved in all aspects of surveying for a new 'poly tunnel' for the horticultural students to use. These detailed tasks require considerable planning by the teachers but offer the students extensive opportunities to develop a variety of skills including research and mathematics. For example, when surveying the plot for the 'poly tunnel', construction students had to apply Pythagoras' theorem. This was done with success by a group of students who had all achieved low grades in their GCSE mathematics course. This was an excellent lesson. Through sensitive interventions and the use of challenging questions by the teacher, the students were able to design the layout and ensure that 90-degree angles were established. NVQ assessment techniques require students to compile portfolios of their work. The standard of the portfolios seen were very good with emphasis being placed on literacy, numeracy, ICT and presentational skills. Verbal testing of a horticultural student was observed and he gave very clear answers and was able to refer to evidence in folders and work records. The portfolio of evidence is very good and extends to photographic evidence illustrating key moments in the developing work. In the lessons seen, all students made considerable progress and the quality of their work was admirable. Their attitudes to work are excellent and they are able to show substantial initiative and get on with tasks with the minimum of supervision. Local employers have been most impressed with students on work placements and job offers have resulted from both them and other employers who have visited the college.
126. The management of these courses is very good. Significant progress in the provision of these two courses, and in other vocational courses, has been accomplished in a short space of time. These courses are highly successful in providing for a group of students who might otherwise face difficulty in finding other suitable courses or employment that would offer the same training opportunities. The students' commitment to their courses is excellent, as too are the retention rates. The courses are successful in meeting the needs of the local community, and partnerships with local businesses are being developed. Very good development plans exist, which cover existing courses and the introduction of new options. At present, vocational education is located a short distance away from the school's two main sites and there is a potential problem of isolation. One major challenge to be addressed is the opportunities of cross-curricular work. Vocational education needs to work in partnership with all other departments.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus was on English language but media studies was also sampled. In media studies, A-level examination results were well above average in 2001. One lesson was observed. This was an examination of the development of a television advertising campaign led by a well-informed and enthusiastic teacher. Students share this enthusiasm for the course. Skills in film making are developing well.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good: teachers have strong subject knowledge and prepare lessons well.
- The marking and assessment of pupils' work is thorough and helpful; as a result, teachers have a good knowledge of student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Good relationships exist between students and teachers; these encourage students to express individual views with confidence.
- Attainment at A-level was in line with the national average in 2001. The attainment of AS-level students was high.

### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons more time could be allocated for students to participate more actively in the lesson.
- Library resources to support AS and A-level students are unsatisfactory at the moment.
- Schemes of work to support the AS and A-level course are not yet complete.

127. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were in line with the national average. This was disappointing compared to the previous three years when the average points scored and the proportion of higher grades achieved was well above the national average. Male students in 2001 were more successful in the examination than were females. All students completed the course. The performance of students in the AS course in Year 12 was very strong in 2001. All 30 students were awarded grades, with more than a half gaining the highest grades, A and B. One student gained the highest grade in the country in the examination taken. Most students have gone on to complete the full two-year course.
128. Standards of work are above average. Students in Year 13 are building well on their solid AS-level foundation. Written work and discussion work indicate that students are achieving at least satisfactorily and, in some cases, well, in relation to their previous levels of attainment. Students studying previously unseen passages in distinctively different styles by Chandler, Faulkner and Burgess were able to make pertinent points about the writers' voice and style. A female student, for example, made perceptively critical points about Chandler's unflattering description of a central female character. She made good wider points also in comparing male and female writers. Students' completed final drafts in writing for specific purposes are of a good standard from students with differing levels of skill. One student had combined his love of various styles of music to write a very well structured review of music on compact disc as a coursework assignment. Other writing of radio monologues reached high standards in final drafts.
129. Students' achievement in Year 12 is good. Most are enjoying the challenge of the language-focused course; a minority are struggling with linguistic analysis at this stage. A particularly successful approach to writing was developing in one group. Students preparing text for a listening audience read their initial opening paragraphs to the group for open critical discussion about appropriate voice and choice of language. All students made good progress as a result of listening to the observations of their peers and to the encouraging suggestions of the teacher. The discussion and choice of appropriate language are developing well.

130. Teaching is good and helps students to develop self-confidence. Careful preparation is made collaboratively by teachers at the beginning of each module to plan approaches and to find suitable resources. Subject knowledge is strong throughout the team and this, together with particularly good relationships between students and teachers, helps students to make good progress on a demanding course. Marking and assessment of students' work is done thoroughly to give students a realistic picture of their level of attainment. Homework is an integral part of the course and was set regularly in the lessons observed. In one group, students were asked to read aloud parts of their writing done for homework that had been recently marked. They had to make a critical comment about how it might be improved with other students invited to make further observations. In this way students are helped by the process of self-evaluation and the constructive criticism of their peers, and are motivated to try harder with the redrafts of their writing. Although time is generally used very well in lessons, some improvement could have been made in a few instances to create more opportunity for students' own contributions. In two lessons the teachers' introductory contributions were longer than necessary and restricted opportunity for student participation in learning.
131. The most successful lessons gave small blocks of time for students to read, to write or to discuss either individually or in pairs areas of a particular topic before sharing their observations with the group. The shared differences of understanding and revelations of occasional misunderstanding are useful in the learning process to both students and to the teacher.
132. The learning process is good. In lessons students are very attentive, in most cases very enthusiastic, and they are usually willing to express their thoughts openly. They respond particularly well to working in pairs and then to sharing ideas with others and listening critically to other students. Teachers ensure that the most reticent students respond in lessons by drawing them into discussion. Students were very open in discussing their work and their aspirations with the visiting inspector.
133. The English department is well organised and well managed. Careful analysis has been made to find reasons why A-level results were lower in 2001 than in previous years. As a result changes have been made in teacher deployment and adjustments made in the approaches to the teaching of the new modules. The department is working on the completion of the schemes of work to support the teaching of the new syllabuses. It rightly sees this as a priority for development. Some students who are very successful at GCSE level in literature might benefit from this opportunity to study literature in greater depth.
134. The book stock for A-level English in the library is unsatisfactory at the moment. It does not support the courses taught. English students would be helped by the improvement of library resources when reorganisation takes place.