

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **EGGBUCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Plymouth

LEA: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113542

Principal: Mrs C Whitty

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones  
18462

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2002

Inspection number: 191267

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Comprehensive                             |
| School category:             | Community                                 |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 to 18                                  |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                     |
| School address:              | Westcott Close<br>Eggbuckland<br>Plymouth |
| Postcode:                    | PL6 5YB                                   |
| Telephone number:            | 01752 779061                              |
| Fax number:                  | 01752 766650                              |
| Appropriate authority:       | The Governing Body                        |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mrs J M Gowing                            |
| Date of previous inspection: | January 1997                              |

| INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM |                |                         |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Team members                          |                |                         | Subject responsibilities   | Aspect responsibilities   |
| 18462                                 | B. Jones       | Registered inspector    |  | <p>Information about the school</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p> |
| 20767                                 | A. Rolfe       | Lay inspector           |  | <p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>  |
| 11508                                 | C. Griffin     | Sixth form co-ordinator | <p>English (post-16)</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>                | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?  |
| 30690                                 | G. Allison     | Team inspector          | <p>Geography</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>                              |   |
| 1288                                  | D. Barraclough | Team inspector          | <p>Modern foreign languages</p> <p>English as an additional language</p> |   |
| 20729                                 | J. Berry       | Team inspector          | <p>Biology</p> <p>Chemistry (post-16)</p>                                |   |
| 23528                                 | A Bird.        | Team inspector          | Mathematics  |   |
| 2642                                  | J. Bond        | Team inspector          | Special educational needs (Hearing Impaired Unit)                        |   |
| 12499                                 | M. Durkin      | Team inspector          | English  |   |
| 8873                                  | C. Evers       | Team inspector          | History  |   |
| 17709                                 | A. Giles       | Team inspector          | <p>Physical education</p> <p>Psychology (post-16)</p>                    |   |

|       |              |                |  |  |
|-------|--------------|----------------|--|--|
| 4773  | P. Gilliat   | Team inspector | Religious education                                |  |
| 30825 | K. Hayton    | Team inspector | Science  |  |
| 25551 | A. Hodge     | Team inspector | Business studies; leisure and recreation (post-16) |  |
| 10727 | R. Humphries | Team inspector | Design and technology.                             |  |
| 31688 | P. McGonagle | Team inspector | Art and design                                     |  |
| 3174  | J. Powell    | Team inspector | Information and communication technology           |  |
| 18670 | P. Tidmarsh  | Team inspector | Music  |  |

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)  
15 The Birches  
Bramhope  
Leeds  
LS16 9DP

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| Information about the college   |           |
| How good the college is   |           |
| What the college does well  |           |
| What could be improved  |           |
| How the college has improved since its last inspection  |           |
| Standards   |           |
| Pupils' attitudes and values  |           |
| Teaching and learning   |           |
| Other aspects of the college  |           |
| How well the college is led and managed   |           |
| Parents' and carers' views of the college   |           |
| <b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>  |           |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>   |           |
| <b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>  | <b>17</b> |
| The college's results and pupils' achievements  |           |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  |           |
| <b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>  | <b>24</b> |
| <b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>                                   | <b>31</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>   | <b>39</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>  | <b>41</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?</b>   | <b>43</b> |
| <b>WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>   | <b>49</b> |
| <b>THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS ATTENDING THE HEARING SUPPORT CENTRE (HSC)</b>                      | <b>50</b> |
| <b>PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS</b>  | <b>53</b> |
| <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b> | <b>59</b> |
| <b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>     | <b>92</b> |

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Eggbuckland Community College is a larger than average mixed college in Plymouth with 1540 students on roll. There are 829 boys and 711 girls. The college has a large sixth form. Students are drawn predominantly from neighbourhoods in the north of the city and the college is heavily oversubscribed. Some of the highest attaining students from local primary schools opt to attend the city's grammar schools. The percentage of students entitled to free college meals is 8.7 per cent, which is below the national average. Around six per cent of students are from ethnic minority families and two per cent of students have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs, including students with statements, is broadly in line with the national average. There are currently 17 students attending the college's resource centre for students with hearing impairments. The attainment of students on entry is generally below average. The college has been a specialist technology college since 1996.

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

This is a good and effective college, which provides good value for money. The sixth form provision is good and cost effective. The leadership and management of the principal, senior staff and the governors are very good. The teaching is good and improving further. Students achieve well throughout the college. The college is well organised. The college is innovative and evaluates its work carefully and to good effect. Students develop positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave very well. The college's financial management procedures are excellent and the principles of best value are used very effectively.

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

- The principal, senior management team and governing body are very effective in ensuring a clear educational direction to the college.
- Students make good progress and achieve well through Years 7 to 11.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 and leads to good learning.
- The college provides very well for students' moral development and well for their social development. This leads to very good behaviour and a good learning atmosphere in classes.
- Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good, making for productive learning.
- The college's teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is a strength and is effective in encouraging students to become independent in their learning.
- The college has established very good relationships with the community and local colleges which makes a positive contribution to the work of the college.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good and enriches the personal development of the many students who take part.

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

- Raise standards in religious education and ensure that sufficient time is given to cover the local agreed syllabus.
- Improve the provision for teaching of history.
- Improve the efficiency with which the college communicates with parents.

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

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

The college has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in January 1997, from what was judged to be a high base of achievement at that time. Students achieve well and continue to gain good results at the end of Years 9 and 11. By the end of Year 11 they achieve very well compared to their starting points to obtain results above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved. The college has responded effectively to the key issues in the previous report and other issues highlighted in the report and has very good capacity and commitment to improve further. The college still does not meet the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average     E

On entry to the college, students' attainment is below average. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with the national average. The results were well below the average of colleges deemed to be similar. The trend in results is in line with the trend nationally. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the average points score per student was above average, and the results over the past five years have been consistently above the national average. The trend in results is in line with the national trend. When compared with results achieved in colleges deemed similar, the results were average. This group of students made very good progress through Years 10 and 11, achieving very well in relation to their prior attainment. Challenging targets were set for these students and were largely met. The results in the 2001 examinations at General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) were broadly in line with the national average as measured by the average points score obtained. The results reversed a dip in results in 2000 and returned to a trend that is broadly average. The results represent satisfactory achievement overall, and targets set on the basis of students' earlier performance at GCSE were broadly met. Retention rates are high and the large majority of students complete their courses. In the work seen in the inspection, standards are now above average by the end of Year 9 in science and broadly in line with the average in English and mathematics. They are at or above average in all other subjects except religious education, where they are below average. Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well in relation to their starting points. In the work seen in the inspection, by the end of Year 11 students are working at a level above average in English and science and broadly in line with the average in mathematics. Students are attaining standards at or above average in all other subjects apart from religious education where they are below average. Overall, students currently in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well in relation to their starting points. Standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly average. Students with special educational needs generally achieve well to meet their individual targets. Students identified as gifted and talented make



good progress and students with English as an additional language achieve well. There are no significant differences in the levels of achievement between boys and girls.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the college               | Very good. Students are enthusiastic about their lessons and show a positive approach to learning. They enjoy coming to college and taking part in extra-curricular activities.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Very good behaviour in and out of lessons. Students show good understanding of the boundaries of acceptable conduct and know right from wrong.   |
| Personal development and relationships | Students' personal development is good. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good. The college provides students with very good opportunities to exercise responsibility and they respond very well. |
| Attendance                             | Satisfactory. Levels of attendance are in line with the national average.  |

## QUALITY OF TEACHING

| Teaching of students: | Years 7 – 9 | Years 10 – 11 | Years 12 – 13 |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching   | Good        | 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.*

The quality of teaching at the college is good overall. Teaching and the quality of learning it promotes are consistently good across Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The teaching observed was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson. There was a high proportion of good teaching and some excellent teaching was also seen.

- Across the wider range of subjects, teachers generally have a good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects
- The quality of teachers' planning is good throughout the college.
- Teachers show commitment to the work they undertake and provide good role models.
- The class management techniques of teachers are generally good and they use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good learning takes place.
- Teachers' expectations of students are high. This applies to students' behaviour and level of effort, and to the quality of their work.
- Teachers mainly use question and answer techniques well in lessons and the use of assessment is an improving area in the college.
- There are still some inconsistencies in the frequency and depth of teachers' marking and their consistency in their use of homework.
- The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. The teaching of numeracy skills is good overall.

- The teaching of students with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and gifted and talented students is good and these students learn effectively and achieve well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

| Aspect  | Comment   |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | Good overall and very good provision of activities to extend and enhance the curriculum. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in providing access to the full programme of study in religious education. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs   | The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good throughout the college.  |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language                                 | There is a very low number of students with English as an additional language. Provision is good and these students make good progress and achieve well   |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good provision overall. Provision for students' moral development is very good. Provision for cultural and social development is good and for spiritual development is satisfactory.                                    |
| How well the college cares for its students   | The provision for health and safety and child protection is good. The college takes good care of its students. The provision for students' personal support and guidance is good.                                       |
| How well does the college work in partnership with parents                                    | The contribution that parents make at home and college to their children's education is satisfactory. The college needs to improve its effectiveness in making links with parents.                                      |

## HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff | Very good. The principal's contribution towards ensuring a clear educational direction for the college's work is excellent. Senior managers make a very effective contribution to the running of the college. Key staff have very good levels of commitment and energy in pursuing continued improvement. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities           | Good. The governors have a very good understanding of the college's work and play an important role in shaping the direction of the college. They are mainly effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. Requirements to provide collective worship are not met.                                      |
| The college's evaluation of its performance                    | Very good and an area of increasing strength. This is an improving feature of the college's work as a whole.  |

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. Staffing, learning resources and accommodation are good overall, notwithstanding some inadequacies in accommodation. Financial management is excellent and the principles of best value are applied very effectively. |
|--------------------------------|--|

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

| What pleases parents most  | What parents would like to see improved  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The commitment of the teaching staff and the way the college is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The progress that their children make in their learning.</li> <li>• The course on citizenship.</li> <li>• The approachability of form tutors.</li> <li>• The good range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• The supply of computers in the college.</li> <li>• The good opportunities for social development.</li> <li>• The positive and effective approach to dealing with bullying issues.</li> <li>• Excellent transfer arrangements into the college.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information they receive about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The college does not work closely enough with parents.</li> <li>• Their children do not receive sufficient homework.</li> <li>• Homework provision is inconsistent.</li> </ul> |

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the college. Evidence from the inspection shows that the college works hard to involve parents in the life of the college but has had only moderate success and needs to become more effective in securing good links with parents. The college has in place a homework policy and homework timetable. Inspectors consider there are some inconsistencies in the use of homework. Reports are satisfactory overall, but there are some inconsistencies in some subjects.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **EGGBUCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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

The sixth form has 296 students, which is above average size. There are equal numbers of male and female students. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is low. The number on roll has increased by 70 over the past decade. Typically, around 65 per cent of Year 11 students stay in the college and are joined by another 30 students who join from other colleges in the authority. The college is involved with other sixth form providers to widen the range of courses available. The largest of these is the Tamar Valley consortium, which provides a wide range of vocational courses. Currently some 50 students from the college are involved in these arrangements. The college admits students with a wider range of attainment than is usual, but overall, the level of attainment of sixth form students is broadly average.

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

The sixth form provision is good and cost effective. It caters well for its students through a very good range of AS and A-level courses and access to a good range of vocational courses and meets the needs of all students. Opportunities are enhanced through the college's involvement with other post-16 education providers in the Plymouth area. Because the curriculum provision has been systematically reviewed and developed the range of courses provides a good match to the students' aspirations and potential. A thorough programme of consultation and guidance helps to ensure appropriate choices and the very low drop out rate confirms that both provision and guidance lead to well-matched choices. The senior management team ensures very good leadership in general and an excellent vision in terms of future development. The teaching and learning are good and currently students are achieving well. Results in 2001 improved from the previous year to bring them back in line with the national average. In both years, however, students achieved satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

#### **Strengths**

- The leadership provided by the senior management team is very good and gives a very clear lead to the development of the sixth form.
- Subject departments are managed and led very well.
- Students are currently attaining well above average standards in English, chemistry, design and technology and geography.
- The quality of teaching is good and students are achieving well in relation to their starting points.
- The good range of courses meets the needs and aspirations of students. They enjoy their studies and course completion rates are high.
- Students receive good advice and guidance about their courses and very good guidance about their future options.
- Resources for supporting students' learning, including ICT, are very good.

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

- Improve the use of information gathered from assessing students to set them more precise targets.
- Monitor students' progress through their courses more systematically.
- Raise attainment in psychology.

*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.

| <b>Subject area</b>                      | <b>Overall judgement about provision with comment</b>  |
|--|--|
| Mathematics                              | Good. Teaching is very good. Students start the course with average attainment but standards seen are above average. Students achieve well.  |
| Biology                                  | Good. A well organised subject. Standards are above average and have been rising rapidly   |
| Design and technology                    | Very good. Teaching is very good. Students achieve very well. Standards are well above average.  |
| Business studies                         | Good. Teaching is good. Students learn well and make good progress. Standards are above average.   |
| Information and communication technology | Good. Standards on taught courses are above average. Teaching is good and results in students making good progress. Lower attainers show particularly good achievement. Key skills work still needs improving. |
| Geography                                | Very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching is very good and students make very good progress.   |
| Chemistry                                | Very good. Teaching and organisation are continuing to produce high standards. Standards are rising and the students are achieving well.   |
| English                                  | Very good. Teaching is very good. Standards are well above average. Achievement is very good in relation to students' earlier standards. Students are highly motivated because of enthusiastic teaching.       |
| French                                   | Satisfactory. Teaching is good. Standards are average. Achievement is satisfactory. Relationships are very good.   |
| Theatre studies                          | Good. Teaching is good. Students achieve well. Relationships are very good.  |
| Psychology                               | Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and also achievement. Standards in Year 13 are below average. Year 12 standards are average.  |
| Leisure and recreation                   | Good. Recent results consistently above average. Teaching on new AVCE course is satisfactory as is achievement. Current attainment is average.   |
| Art, and art and textiles                | Good. Teaching is good. Students work with a high degree of independence. Their work includes good breadth and variety. There are very good relationships.   |

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| How well students are guided and supported                       | The college provides very good and carefully structured advice, support and guidance. The very low drop-out rate confirms the effectiveness of this process. A well thought out induction process effectively supports the transition to post-16 studies. Students from other institutions integrate successfully. Citizenship lessons are the source of very good advice and guidance. Students also receive very good advice and support for higher education applications. There is a well-established programme of consultations, work experience, residential and day visits to higher education providers and interviews. About 75 per cent of each cohort successfully progresses to higher education. Tutors effectively monitor how well students are coping with their workload through individual tutorials. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | The governors, senior management and head of sixth form ensure a clear educational direction to this aspect of the college's work and are in a good position to assure good standards. Very good procedures are being developed to monitor and evaluate the performance of students and teachers but there is still work to do in developing more precise target setting to chart the progress of students in Year 12. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted in line with the college's aims. There is a low drop-out rate at the end of Year 12 because students are suited to and satisfied with their courses. The management of the sixth form funding is very good.  |

## 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>• The approachability of their teachers and the good support and help they receive.</li> <li>• The experience, expertise and knowledge of their teachers which result in good teaching.</li> <li>• The guidance they receive about appropriate courses in the college and for their future education and training.</li> <li>• The expectations and ethos of the college: they are treated as young adults but expected to work hard and with maturity.</li> <li>• The areas and opportunities for independent learning, including the use of computers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of printed information.</li> <li>• The choice of courses.</li> <li>• Support for settling into the sixth form.</li> <li>• Advice about courses, future options and personal problems.</li> <li>• Information about progress.</li> </ul> |

The views on what could be improved emerged from a questionnaire, which was completed by a minority of students very early in the academic year. Interviews during the inspection

revealed that the students hold significantly more positive views than the questionnaire responses revealed. Inspectors agree with the positive attitudes that the students revealed during their interviews. Students rightly value the experience and expertise of their teachers as well as their approachability and willingness to offer help and support. They are well informed about their courses following a thorough guidance process. The low drop-out rate from courses confirms the procedure's effectiveness. Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and training. The distinctive ethos of the college recognises that the students are young adults and expects them to develop as independent learners. Inspectors agree that the students could receive more information about their progress and the college recognises the need to develop this aspect of its work.

## **COMPARING PROVISION IN COLLEGES**

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry to school, students' attainment is below average. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with the national average. The results were well below the average of colleges deemed to be similar on the basis of the proportion of students entitled to free college meals. In 2001, Year 11 students' results in the GCSE examinations were above the national average. They were average compared to similar colleges. This group of students achieved very well in relation to their starting points in Year 9
2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above was well above the national average in science, above average in mathematics and below average in English. The proportion reaching level 6 and above was average in English, mathematics and science. Overall, results were average in English, mathematics and science. Compared with schools deemed similar on the basis of free school meals, results were below average in English, mathematics and science. The results obtained by boys and girls are not significantly different overall. The results represent satisfactory achievement for this group of students. The trend in results over time is broadly in line with the national trend
3. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the average points score per student was above average, and the results over the past five years have been consistently above the national average. The trend in results is in line with the national trend. When compared with examination results achieved in colleges deemed similar, the results were average. This group of students made very good progress through Years 10 and 11, achieving very good standards in relation to their prior attainment. Girls gained better results than boys in line with the trend nationally, particularly in the proportion gaining five or more A\*-C grades. There were some variations in results at GCSE between subjects within the college. Students gained better results in science and physical education and these results were above the national average. In some areas the results were significantly lower, including art and design, design and technology, English language and literature, French, history and mathematics
4. The work seen in the inspection showed that students are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieving well. The work of the current Year 11 group demonstrates that they too are making good progress. Throughout the Years 7 to 11, current students' levels of achievement are good in relation to their prior attainment and reflect the levels of achievement of the last examination group.
5. In the work seen in the inspection, standards are now above average by the end of Year 9 in science and broadly in line with the average in English and mathematics. They are above average in ICT, geography, art and design, and physical education. Standards are in line with the average in all other subjects except religious education, where attainment levels are below average. The students currently in Year 9 have made good progress through Years 7 to 9 and achieved good standards in relation to their prior attainment. This is the case in nearly all subjects, with history and modern foreign languages achieving satisfactorily. However, students' level of achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education because they receive insufficient time to cover the programmes of study in the local agreed syllabus.



6. In the work seen in the inspection, by the end of Year 11 students are working at a level above average in English and science and broadly in line with the average in mathematics. This is a very similar pattern to the standards seen in Year 9. Students are attaining standards above average in ICT, geography, art and design and physical education. In all other subjects, apart from religious education, standards are broadly average. In religious education they are below average. Overall, students currently in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in relation to their starting points. In science, the current students are making very good progress and achieving very well. In design and technology, ICT, geography, art and design, music and physical education, students make good progress in relation to their starting points and achieve well. In modern foreign languages and history, students are achieving satisfactorily and attain broadly average levels of attainment. In business studies no work was seen during the inspection, but past results show that higher attaining students do well and the proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades is above average while the average points score is broadly average. In religious education, students in Year 11 are not achieving the levels they should.
7. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Most students make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2001, more than half the students who had received additional support for their literacy progressed by two levels in at least one subject. Departmental records show good progress in spelling and reading as a result of frequent, systematic teaching. In Year 11, GCSE results also confirm good progress. The entry and success rate for students taking English, mathematics and double science are significantly above the national average. More students, including those with special educational needs, are successful in English literature than in most colleges. The proportion leaving Year 11 in 2001 with five or more GCSEs at A\*-G and one or more A\*-G is well above the national average and confirms the good progress of students with special educational needs. Half the students on the special educational needs register in 2001 achieved at last one pass at C or better. These standards were evident in work seen during the inspection.
8. The college has recently identified students in each year who are the highest attainers and/or have specific talents, for example in music or sport. The college is developing its policy and its practices to ensure that these students are catered for and are stretched and challenged. The systems are developing well and these students produce high standards. They receive good provision that extends and enhances their curriculum. This is an area of developing strength and these students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
9. There is a small proportion of students of different ethnic background. Within this group there are no students whose English is at an early stage of acquisition. The attainment of students with English as an additional language at GCSE in 2001 was above average. Students attained their targets and in some subjects, such as science and English, they exceeded them. Students with English as an additional language achieve standards which are similar to and sometimes better than their peers. This is because all the students currently in college are proficient enough in English to be able to understand the language well and express themselves at least appropriately. Overall, there are no significant differences in performance between boys and girls throughout the Years 7 to 9. In the GCSE examinations, differences in performance have been broadly in line with differences nationally. There is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve the performance of all students and reduce any inequalities.

10. Students throughout the college have average standards of literacy. Standards of speaking are average and students of all levels of attainment express their views confidently and clearly. Listening skills are more variable and are less strong in lower attaining students when they are given insufficient opportunity to engage in speaking and listening activities. Most departments emphasise the use of technical language and students use it accurately. Reading standards are average as students read, understand and analyse subject texts of increasing complexity. Occasionally, lack of appropriate texts hampers the students' literacy development. Lower ability students generally read only for a purpose. Students who have weak reading skills on entry receive extra help, which enables them to make good progress. Writing is average. Students write for a range of purposes, with increasing fluency and confidence. In some subjects they write at length and in a variety of forms. The work of higher ability students is generally accurate. Middle and lower ability students' work is sometimes marred by basic errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation
11. The standard of numeracy is broadly average. The standards seen in ICT, design technology, art and design, science, mathematics and modern foreign languages are above average. In ICT, knowledge of percentages and graphs underpins work on databases and spreadsheets. Students can vary the data and recognise the change in outcomes. In science, students make good use of fractions, decimals and percentages in a variety of contexts. In food technology accurate measurement is essential when making bread and there is good numerical evidence in project work of surveys and bar charts to illustrate the outcomes. Years 10 and 11 science students made very good use of the rules of algebra transforming formulae and substituting given values when solving velocity and resistance problems. Despite below average levels of prior attainment on entry to the college, students achieve well, matching national expectations by the age of 14.
12. The college set targets for the 2001 Year 9 students taking National Curriculum tests and for students in Year 11 taking GCSE examinations. In both cases the targets were realistic and challenging and based on good quality information about their attainment levels and the progress they were making. Year 9 students exceeded their targets in mathematics and science, but did not reach the targets set in English. The targets set for the proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more grades A\*-C and one or more grades A\*-G were met. The target average points score was not reached.

### **Sixth form**

13. The results in the 2001 examinations at A-level were broadly in line with the national average when compared to all maintained schools as measured by the average points score obtained. The results are higher than those in 2000, and returned to a trend of broadly average attainment. Comparatively few undertook the GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS-level) course. Results were well above average in mathematics and music. The individual student taking economics and sociology did not complete the course. There were 20 entries in vocational examinations. Students' results were well above average in business studies and leisure and tourism. Results were well below average in health and social care. Male students obtained better results than female students in both GCE A-level and AS-level examinations and in GCE VCE/Advanced GNVQ examinations.
14. At A-level, male students performed marginally better than females. The college undertook some analyses of data using a commercial package to establish the

amount of value added to this group of students. Overall, the analyses showed that students mainly progressed well and achieved standards higher than may have been predicted. Retention rates are high and the large majority of students completed their courses.

15. In the 2001 A-level examinations, results were very high in geography, and well above average in design and technology and home economics. Results were above average in art and design, business studies, physics and sociology. They were in line with the average in mathematics, economics and communication studies. Results were below average in biology, chemistry, English literature, history, French and Spanish. In other subjects taken, the numbers in the groups were too small to make valid comparisons.
16. In 2001, students took examinations for the first time in the new course leading to the GCE advanced subsidiary award (GCE AS-level). Not all subjects entered students for the examination; for example, there were no entries in mathematics. There is no data available for comparing grades, but in reviewing average points scores in individual subjects some comparisons can be made between the college and national average figures in individual subjects. These should be treated with caution, however, since they are the first release figures and are as yet un-validated. Subject-specific comparisons reflect an improving picture in the college's sixth form performance. Students gained above average points scores in biology, chemistry, home economics, business studies, art, geography, English, design and technology, and economics. Results were broadly in line with the average in history, sociology and French. They were below average in psychology, communication studies and Spanish.
17. In the work seen during the inspection in the subjects focused on in the sixth form, the standards that students are now attaining are well above average in English, chemistry, design and technology and geography. They are above average in mathematics, biology, art and design, business studies and ICT. Standards are broadly average in French, theatre studies and leisure and recreation. Standards are below average in psychology. Current standards reflect a range of prior attainment present and in all 13 subjects, the level of students' achievement is at least satisfactory and in the majority of subjects is good in relation to their starting points on joining the courses. In English, chemistry and geography, students achieve very well.
18. The provision for the development of students' key skills is satisfactory. All students who follow NVQ courses via the Tamar Valley Consortium follow specific courses in communication, application of number and ICT. Opportunities exist for all other students to follow accredited courses in ICT, but involvement is not a compulsory requirement. In work seen in subjects, key skills standards were above average overall. Working with others was a particular strength in French and in design and technology. The students' use of ICT was well above average in chemistry, biology and in the separate ICT course. The college is currently reviewing its procedures to monitor the delivery and standards of key skills, building on the profiling and monitoring it has developed for students in Years 7 to 11.
19. Students' communication skills are above average. They take full advantage of discussion opportunities in most subjects. In general discussion students are articulate, clear and use persuasion effectively. In a Year 13 business studies lesson students used technical vocabulary fluently and accurately. They used a wide range of efficient reading strategies such as skimming and scanning to find relevant information. In English, students display good research skills, often using web sites

to learn more about the contemporary backgrounds to their texts. They write with good accuracy and clarity. Enrichment opportunities such as the Engineering Education Scheme, Young Enterprise, the European Youth Parliament and the Bar Mock Trial enhance the students' standards of problem solving, communication and working with others.

20. The standard in the key skill of application of number in the sixth form is average overall. Standards are above average in mathematics, ICT, design and technology, art and design, and business studies. Scientific calculators are used well. In ICT, students make good use of a wide range of numeracy skills, for example in a data handling simulation where graphical representation was extremely accurate and detailed. In art and design, good use is made of reading and drawing to scale, for example enlarging small drawn patterns and prints to their full size. In design and technology good use is made of market research findings by representing collected data in a variety of mathematical ways. In mathematics, students have access to and make good use of graphic calculators. Students make good use of previously taught skills to further their knowledge and understanding of mathematics, comparing results from experimental work with theory based on a mathematical model. In one example they reviewed Galileo's study of motion based on rolling balls of different sizes down fixed slopes. Students working towards the NVQ make good use of number and the application of number through a key skills scheme, which is designed to meet the needs of the individual and is regularly monitored.
21. Students demonstrate good competence overall in ICT. In almost all GCE AS and A2-level courses, students use a range of software to present their coursework. As in the previous report, students use spreadsheets well to present findings from surveys in graphical or chart form. In almost every subject, students use the Internet well for research, demonstrating very good skills in using the network, selecting the appropriate software programs and managing their work files on the computer. There are differences between the skills shown by students following formal courses in the subject and those who do not. For example, specialists tend to show greater efficiency in their searches, using different search engines for different purposes. Students are able to produce at least basic word-processed documents to support their work across the range of subjects. Those who are not following one or other of the certificated courses in ICT tend to use a relatively limited range of enhancements. Those on AVCE or key skills courses are more adept at matching presentation to purpose, for example selecting appropriate illustrations or using layout to improve readability. The use of spreadsheets is more variable, but most students are able use them to produce charts and graphs. Students following design and technology courses are skilled users of design software to draft and present their ideas well.
22. Students with special educational needs comprise 5.4 per cent of sixth form students. Those with statements of special educational needs comprise 2.7 per cent. The range of need includes general learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties, hearing impairment, behavioural difficulties and physical disability. Because of staff awareness and individual support they make good progress within lessons and their levels of achievement over the longer period are similar to their peers. There is no significant overall difference between the progress of male and female students. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress between Year 12 and Year 13 students, both groups achieving well overall.

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

23. Students' attitudes, behaviour, and relationships are very good, as is their personal development. This reflects a further improvement on the good standards seen at the time of the last inspection. All these factors have a positive impact on students' learning.
24. Students state that they enjoy coming to college. Discussions with students in all year groups indicate that they have positive attitudes to learning, they are able to identify favourite subjects, and a significant number of students participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the college. Students are interested in what they are studying and take an active part in their learning. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, maintain concentration during lessons and make positive contributions to classroom discussions. In many lessons students showed the ability to work well together, sharing ideas and learning from each other. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson, students were keen to question their teacher to improve their knowledge and understanding of the topic under consideration, and this made a positive contribution to their learning. Most students take a pride in their work; they are willing and able to talk about their work and explain their ideas to inspectors. Students with special educational needs generally have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the college. Students who stay into the sixth form have very good attitudes to learning.
25. The overall standard of behaviour is very good. In a large majority of the lessons seen behaviour was good and on many occasions very good. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson students' attitudes and behaviour were very good throughout the lesson. They entered into the lesson with enthusiasm, but were prepared to listen carefully to their teacher's instructions and to each other's ideas, and therefore made very good progress during the lesson. In only a very few lessons was there any evidence of unsatisfactory behaviour or poor attitudes to learning. Most students are aware of what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour, they have a good understanding of the college's system of rewards and sanctions, and readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of poor behaviour.
26. Despite the cramped nature of some of the corridors and staircases, students move about the college in a mature and sensitive manner. There were no instances of inappropriate behaviour observed in the circulation areas at lesson change-over times or at lunchtime. Outside lessons, students interact well together, before and after college; at lunchtime and breaks, they chat and socialise without any signs of rowdy or boisterous behaviour. Generally students treat college equipment with care and respect.
27. Bullying is an occasional problem, but the college has in place an anti-bullying policy that makes clear that the college will not tolerate bullying, and enables the college to react quickly and positively to known instances. Parents and students have indicated that these procedures are effective. The number of students excluded in the last academic year was relatively low, with 18 temporary exclusions relating to nine boys and seven girls; there have not been any permanent exclusions this year. Inspection of the exclusion records indicate that the reasons for exclusion were due to serious violation of the college's code of conduct and that the use of exclusion was appropriate in the circumstances.
28. Students make very good progress in their personal development. Relationships between staff and students are very good, and so too are relationships between students. These relationships make a positive contribution to students' learning. Students work well together, they are interested in their lessons and keen to answer

questions. The very good relationships that exist mean that they are not afraid to give wrong answers, because they know that their contribution will be valued. Students are developing their understanding of other people's faiths and cultures and are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, mainly through their studies in citizenship lessons allied to form tutor periods. This provision offsets to some degree the lack of time given to the study of religious education.

29. Students in all year groups show a willingness to take additional responsibilities and are given many opportunities to do so. These include the college council, students' mentors, and access managers of tutorial bases and ICT suites. ICT access managers' responsibilities include ensuring students have access to all main college ICT rooms every lunchtime and providing support for students. They are also responsible for the selection and training of new access managers. Students involved in these activities take a pride in undertaking these tasks and take their responsibilities seriously. The college is working towards the whole college being managed by students throughout the lunchtime as well as all public events. Students are encouraged to work independently and take some responsibility for their learning, and in a significant number of lessons, students were seen to be working independently and successfully.
30. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes and behave well. They benefit from well-targeted support from the classroom assistants. In English, effective organisation of the lessons leads to positive efforts and good behaviour. Year 7 students value the chances they have to make gains in reading, spelling and in the organisation of their writing. Good teaching strategies such as making it clear what is expected in terms of work and behaviour effectively support the students' attitudes. The college's support systems for dealing with difficulties in lessons works smoothly and effectively to calm situations down and to reduce disruption of teaching. The clear detail on the students' individual education plans also helps to inform teachers about helpful strategies for individual students. Out of lessons, students participate well in the college's extra-curricular programme.
31. Overall attendance is satisfactory. Both authorised and unauthorised absence are slightly below national averages; however, attendance in Year 11 is below 90 per cent. This represents a decline in attendance levels since the last inspection when attendance was very good. To a significant degree the attendance levels of students in Year 11 is influenced by a small number of students who have been absent for considerable periods of time due to medical and social reasons. Registration is undertaken morning and afternoon and meets statutory requirements.

## **Sixth form**

32. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes towards learning and towards the college in general. They are keen to take responsibility for and participate in activities. These include activities that are directly related to their studies and additional activities that the college provides to extend and enhance the curriculum. Relationships with one another and staff are very positive and constructive. Students show a high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Their behaviour is exemplary. Students have a strong identity with the college and of their role as members of the college. They assist in curriculum areas and organise a large number of extra-curricular activities and charitable events for younger students. Attendance in lessons is good and students are usually punctual to lessons. Students are developing a good degree of independence and the vast majority have good skills to enable them to continue their learning in adult life.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. The quality of teaching is good. Over two thirds of teaching is good, and in a quarter of lessons very good or better teaching was observed. The impact made by the good teaching is seen in the levels of achievement among current students, which is good, and the good quality learning that is taking place. In most subjects, students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. The overall teaching provision made for students with English as an additional language and those students with special educational needs is also good and ensures that they make good progress and achieve well.
34. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson observed, good or better in around two thirds of lessons and very good or better in around a fifth. In one lesson observed, the teaching was excellent. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is also good. It follows the same pattern, but there was no unsatisfactory teaching and five lessons were seen where the teaching was excellent. Around three quarters of teaching was good or better and nearly a third was very good. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching is very good overall in geography, music and physical education. It is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and all other subjects except modern foreign languages where teaching is satisfactory. In religious education no teaching took place during the inspection. The proportion of good and better teaching ensures that students achieve well through these years.
35. In Years 10 and 11, as in Years 7 to 9, the same pattern exists, with very good teaching in art and design, music and physical education, and good teaching in most other subjects. The teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. No teaching was observed in religious education during the inspection because of the timetable structure. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and this is reflected in results at GCSE. In religious education, the subject teaching has been subsumed into citizenship lessons. As a result, the time allocation is well below that normally found and students do not achieve the standards they should.
36. The college is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all and, as a result, provision is good. The college is careful in applying principles of equality of opportunity to ensure that different groups are not disadvantaged. Their progress is reviewed and care taken to ensure that the college's inclusion policy is effective in ensuring that all have equal chances to learn well and achieve their potential. For example, considerable emphasis is placed on raising the attainment of boys without ignoring the needs of the girls. Examination results of girls and boys are fully analysed to determine the effectiveness of teaching. Despite this approach there are occasions where timetable and staffing constraints have led to some inequalities. In Years 7 to 9 in particular, non-specialist teachers are responsible for teaching in a number of classes in history. Where classes receive more than one teacher, there is a lack of continuity and sometimes standards are adversely affected. In such cases, the teachers work hard to maintain some continuity, and individual lessons are often taught well, but students' learning is adversely affected and their achievement is lower than in other subjects.
37. The highest attainers and those students identified by the college as able and gifted receive good teaching and achieve well. The initiatives to further extend the learning opportunities for these students are relatively new, but increasingly effective. The provision made for teaching students with special educational needs is good and they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

38. Students with English as an additional language are well taught and they learn well from their teachers and their peers. They are usually absorbed into the mainstream of the class because of their competent English, which enables them to benefit from teaching in all areas of the curriculum and to make good progress. Teachers give individual help when needed and have good strategies for developing language skills. There are appropriate resources in the college to support the students' language development.
39. Students with special educational needs are taught well. From Year 7 they receive individual and small group support that improves their skills of reading, writing and spelling. This provision is planned and taught by specialist teachers, ably supported by the teaching assistants. It continues through Years 7 to 9 and enables the students to reach a stage at which they can cope independently with the reading demands of their courses. Individual support continues as appropriate during Years 10 and 11. Teaching assistants play an integral role in the provision. They monitor the students' progress on tasks closely and ensure they are keeping up to date with their work. In subjects throughout the curriculum, teaching and learning are well targeted. Again, the support of teaching assistants makes a significant and effective contribution. The clarity and distribution of independent educational plans also help to ensure that teachers are well informed about the students' needs and about the best way to deal with them. Materials and tasks are suitably amended to meet the students' needs. For example, in a very well planned Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher's careful use of grouping of students and switching around of the activities sustained interest and supported learning effectively.
40. Teachers manage their classes well and they use the time in the lessons well to enable good learning to take place. The college has adopted an effective and consistent approach to dealing with inappropriate behaviour on the part of students. This goes a long way towards ensuring that students consistently receive a firm but positive approach in an effort to keep them in class and keep them learning. The college is enjoying a good measure of success in this respect. In a number of classrooms, teachers have to cope with relatively large numbers of students in cramped conditions. Often in these lessons, the teachers are forced into a particular style of teaching that gives little opportunity for students to be other than passive learners. It is to the credit of these teachers and their students that they manage the situation well and still maintain a good learning atmosphere in the lessons.
41. In contrast to these situations, the college is keen to extend the quality of students' learning by taking an innovative approach to teaching that puts a great deal of the responsibility for learning onto the students. This is done in a measured way to make certain that students undertake such responsibility seriously. As a result, it is commonplace to see knowledgeable students leading their peers in researching a subject using ICT and doing so very effectively. The same philosophy underpins other subject teaching and students respond eagerly to finding their own answers and determining their own pace of learning. Currently a class of Year 8 students undertake much of their work using laptop computers. As well as promoting good learning in these students, the college is monitoring and evaluating the initiative to ensure its effectiveness and is at the forefront in developing the use of ICT in learning. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, excellent use of an interactive whiteboard engaged and involved the students and allowed them to participate in the running of the lesson. As a result they quickly established their own part in a lesson on reaction times and the learning that took place was of the highest order.



42. Across a wide range of subjects, teachers generally have a good level of knowledge and understanding of and an enthusiasm for their subjects. Teachers provide good role models and students and parents express their admiration for the teachers' commitment and the work they undertake. In the best lessons, this subject knowledge and enthusiasm are used to good effect to allow teachers to be flexible and respond to the students' needs as they arise. For example, in a Year 7 ICT lesson, both the teacher and the technician supporting the lesson showed very good subject knowledge and computing expertise. As a result, this first lesson in ICT for the class was a very good learning experience where they accomplished much and enjoyed doing so. The balance of well-planned activities ensured students' active participation for the full 60 minutes. Students were engaged, concentrated well and their overall learning was very good.
43. Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high. This not only applied to students' behaviour and level of effort, but also, in the best teaching, to the quality of their work. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, the teacher initiated a studious, high-achieving atmosphere from the start. The homework already undertaken provided the springboard for a lesson that sought to examine the character of Macbeth. The work completed by the students showed careful research and this was built on by the teacher to create an intellectual climate. The high expectations of the teacher relating to students' contributions, attention and general work ethic led to a lesson where very good learning took place.
44. Much of the good teaching in geography and science results from the teachers' high expectations of students, the effective ways in which they manage their classes and their insistence on good standards. For example, in a Year 10 geography lesson, pupils were managed very well in a lesson planned carefully to ensure that they sharpened their examination techniques. Excellent learning took place as a result, with all students involved and all making excellent progress in a demanding lesson taught at very high pace.
45. The quality of teachers' planning is good throughout the college, both in the longer term and for individual lessons. The college has emphasised the importance of teachers across all subjects to share their lesson objectives with their classes. In the best lessons, the teachers' detailed planning ensured that students were clear about what should be learned in a lesson and this gave students a shared purpose to the lesson.
46. Teachers mainly use question and answer techniques well to consolidate students' knowledge, keep all students involved and inform their own judgements as to how well students understand new work and make progress. In many lessons observed, this approach, allied to the very good relationships engendered between students and with their teachers, enabled a relatively informal atmosphere to promote very good learning. The students played their full part in this by behaving very well and showing their good attitudes towards learning.
47. The use of assessment is an improving area in the college. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the way teachers mark students' work, and the frequency and depth with which marking is undertaken. In the best practice, students' work is marked thoroughly and to a pattern that all teachers within a department use and students know. In science, for example, very informative marking gives students a clear idea of how well they have done in a piece of work and what they must do to improve further. The use of homework is satisfactory overall, but the same inconsistencies still occur in a minority of cases. There is some very good practice

where homework is set regularly to a timetable to extend the work of the classroom. In other cases, homework is not used effectively and the homework timetable is not followed closely enough.

48. The teaching of basic skills is good overall. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory and most subjects undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously. For example, a range of texts is provided in all subjects to encourage the use of technical and specialist vocabulary, especially in science, drama and English. The library, too, supports all subjects, for instance by stocking specialised texts and multi-media materials. The English department has dictionaries available in each classroom; key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise students with these words. Carefully censored Internet access allows students to research topics in detail. Students discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly in most subjects and show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. More developed discursive and analytical speaking is not consistent, however, in subjects where literacy teaching is emphasised less. In modern foreign languages, for example, students' speaking skills at GCSE were their weakest area. Reading fluency is encouraged by teachers and seen to particular effect in English and history. The textbook used in mathematics has a high reading age, which was observed to undermine the interpretation of some questions. Writing at length is a feature of the teaching in English and history. With the support of the English and special educational needs departments, lower attaining students gradually make improvements to their spelling, reading and writing skills.
49. The teaching of numeracy skills is good. This results in standards that are broadly in line with the average, but in some subjects the standard is higher, for example in ICT, design and technology, art and design, science, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The teaching of lower attaining students is good. Selected students are withdrawn from some lessons in Year 7 where there is need to support and improve their numerical competency. Individual 'Successmaker' targets are established and student performance is tracked. Summer colleges are a regular event where additional teaching and experience help younger students. In mathematics, teachers make good use of the National Numeracy Strategy's approach, with teachers introducing a mental 'warm-up' session at the start of many lessons across Years 7 to 9. Students are encouraged to take part in 'mathematics challenge' and master classes. Despite below average levels of attainment on entry to the college, students achieve well in response to the teaching they receive and match national expectations by the age of 14. Many departments include references to numeracy in their schemes of work, although, as yet, no whole-college curriculum audit has been conducted to support teaching and learning.
50. As befits the college's status as a technology college, teachers show good awareness of how computers can be used to aid learning, drawing on good practice around the world. The college has provided a wide range of training opportunities to ensure that staff have the skills needed to use ICT to support their work, both in the classroom and to ease the burden of administration. Groups of teachers are involved in developing new ways of learning, such as the pilot Year 8 laptop project that can, in time, be used more widely. The interactive whiteboard group is exploring ways of incorporating this technology into lessons, which is resulting in a far greater involvement of pupils in the learning process. The college is also starting to exploit the way in which the capabilities of interactive digital video technology can be used. The college's intranet facility has become an established way by which teachers provide a wide range of learning materials for pupils, so that they can access supplementary work from home or to support individual learning activities. As a result of the college's

considerable investment in staff training and in learning resources, other subjects of the curriculum make a very good contribution to the students' development in ICT in Years 7 to 11, and to the standards reached. As a result, students are natural users of computers to communicate information, handle data, and use on-line materials in all of their other subjects. Work in mathematics, science and design and technology also contributes well to the students' use and understanding of how computers may be used in modelling, sensing and control. In all years, subject teams are aware of which strands of the subject will be delivered within their own schemes of work. This is monitored carefully by the co-ordinator for ICT. Moreover, the teachers concerned play a key part in assessing the students' standards in the subject at the end of Year 9, moderated by the co-ordinator. This widespread awareness of the subject is helping the college to evolve into an 'e-learning' community. For example, students in the Year 8 laptop group naturally turn to on-line sources to discover more about Charles I's money problems, whilst students in a range of subjects use interactive whiteboards as a natural learning tool. The power of digital audio and video recording is also being exploited. A Year 10 dance group used digital video to analyse performances, whilst in GCSE music, students used computers to generate multi-tracked works and present traditional notations correctly. At breaks and lunchtimes, the library and computer rooms buzz with purposeful activity as students of all ages write up work or carry out researches.

51. The work undertaken by the principal, governors and senior staff to introduce and consolidate performance management in the college has made a clear impact. The systems and strategies to monitor and improve teaching are effective in raising standards. Areas identified as weaker have improved as teaching quality has been raised. There is a clear indication of good capacity to raise the standards of teaching further and to make best use of the innovative approach taken to improve students' learning. The college has improved its teaching quality since the previous inspection from an already high base. The unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced significantly and there is now a greater proportion of good and very good teaching and some teaching of the highest order.

### **Sixth form**

52. The quality of teaching is good overall and is an improving feature in the college. The impact of this improvement was reflected in the A-level results in 2001 and the results in the one-year courses leading to the AS-level examinations, also taken in 2001.
53. Teaching observed was good or better in four fifths of the lessons and very good or better in over a third. Of the 63 lessons observed, none were unsatisfactory. The overall quality of teaching in the subjects that were focused upon for the inspection was good. In English, chemistry, design and technology and geography, teaching is very good. It is satisfactory in leisure and recreation and in psychology and good in all other subjects. Other subjects in the sixth form provision were sampled and, in general, reflected the same good provision.
54. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching that enables them to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The highest attainers too, make good progress and attain high results in their A-level examinations in response to good teaching. Similarly, students from different ethnic minority backgrounds make good progress in line with their peers and the progress made by male and female students is not significantly different.

55. Teachers in the sixth form have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They also have a very good understanding of the examination requirements in their subjects and the demands that students must meet in order to succeed. In the best lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a clear structure that focuses on building up students' knowledge and understanding and leads them on to extend this process to studying independently. For example, in a Year 13 chemistry lesson, the teacher used a depth of experience and understanding to illustrate how students can gain highest marks by using their own knowledge, in this case, of polymerisation. The learning process was well planned, using the interactive whiteboard to very good effect. As a result, the students gained in confidence as well as reinforcing their earlier work on the topic. A feature of this lesson and others that encourage the students in the sixth form to achieve as well as they do was the very good quality of the course and lesson planning.
56. The majority of lessons are characterised by the teachers' high expectations of their students. They respond by adopting a responsible attitude towards their studies. As a result, relationships are usually very good and an ethos of challenge is generated. This was seen clearly in a business studies lesson dealing with concepts central to the study of economics. In this revision lesson, students were challenged to be precise in their terminology. The relationships were such that all were prepared to contribute and as a result they learned much from each other, including learning from others' misconceptions and mistakes. This was a relaxed lesson just prior to an examination, but one in which much was achieved by the teacher and learning was very good.
57. As is the case in Years 7 to 11, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are well established and the college is in a good position to identify and disseminate the excellent practice that exists and does help students to achieve as well as they do in geography for example. . In some subjects, such as psychology the process needs to be more formalised and regular. This process is needed to offset some teaching through the college that relies too heavily upon an approach where students sit and take notes and are rather passive learners. It is to their credit that in such lessons students continue to work hard and make progress.
58. Assessment is now used more effectively by teachers to chart students' progress and give them an accurate picture of where they stand in relation to course requirements and what they need to do to improve further. During the second year of their courses in Year 13, students' awareness and understanding, of their potential, and how to fulfil it, are good. It is enhanced by review interviews with members of the college leadership team. Their end of Year 12 examinations provide a good basis for setting targets. This is an area of developing strength in the teaching of sixth form students rather than one that is firmly embedded in the college's working practice. The employment of a commercial programme to inform the process adds strength to the process as well as estimating the value added to the students' results at the end of their courses. Such a systematic and rigorous approach has not as yet been extended to students in Year 12 and teachers do not, as yet, make enough use of previous results to set targets and expectations and to track students' progress towards their targets. There is some good practice in this area, for example in geography, design and technology and chemistry, but it needs to be spread further. The marking of students' work is satisfactory.

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

59. The college provides a good range of learning opportunities for students aged 11 to 16, including an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. Since the last inspection the curriculum has developed well to meet more specifically the broad range of attainments that students have on entry to the college. This development is the result of careful review and analysis on the part of the senior management team. The provision for the teaching of religious education is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
60. The curriculum provided for students in Years 7 to 9 is broad and relevant. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum. In Years 7 and 8 a new music and ICT programme captures the students' interest and results in rapid progress. All students follow a separate ICT course. In other subjects the college's ICT co-ordinator carefully tracks and monitors the provision for ICT to ensure good and rational coverage. As a result of a careful review of the curriculum there has been an increase in the number of teaching groups for English, mathematics and science. The college has increased the amount of time allocated to English in Years 7 and 8 to improve standards of literacy. In addition there are progress units in Year 7 to support students whose standards in English were below average on leaving primary school. There are some weaknesses in the organisation of the curriculum. In history too many classes share teachers and this adversely affects the students' progress, and music has too little time to meet fully all of the National Curriculum.
61. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good. It provides a wide range of courses that meet the students' varying range of needs. As a result of a recent review the college has increased the element of choice available for Year 10 students. All follow a broad common core for the majority of their time but also take two other subjects that match their interests and aptitudes. All students take double science and more students sit and succeed in GCSE English literature than in most colleges. The college makes a strong and effective effort to meet the needs of all students in Years 10 and 11. In addition to GCSE options in courses such as dance, drama and business studies, there are vocational courses in engineering, catering and ICT. There is a distinctly modified curriculum for disaffected students, aptly named the 'Bridge Project' which is successful in keeping these students in college and ensuring their continued learning. Other students take a slightly reduced examination programme to allow them to keep up to date with their studies in other subjects. There are also core non-examination courses in citizenship and physical education.
62. As a technology college, the college has been very successful in incorporating ICT into the curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, the basic work in discrete lessons in the subject is complemented by a range of further experiences across the other subjects of the curriculum. The new Year 7 course is already proving successful in ensuring that skills and applications go hand in hand through the close links with music technology. The work that is done in other subjects is carefully monitored and the ICT co-ordinator moderates the assessments made by teachers across the curriculum to produce Year 9 assessments in the subject. In Years 10 and 11, this process continues, although work is still in hand to ensure that, in the absence of specialist teaching for many pupils, their experiences continue to expand their capabilities. Curriculum links with primary colleges are being enhanced by the 'laptops in primary schools' project, where younger pupils in some schools are given the opportunity to have intensive experience of using computers in their work. This is having a significant effect on the standards of ICT work on entry to the college for the pupils concerned. Overall, the college is working with over 50 other primary and secondary schools in the Plymouth area to develop the concept of 'electronic-learning' (e-learning), to raise standards.

63. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good and is a major aspect of the college's life. The 'Activate' sports programme involves a very high proportion of students in activities with community organisations. There is a very good range of sports teams. There are annual college dramatic productions. For musicians there is a very good range of instrumental lessons and extension activities, including visits to concerts. There are many opportunities to attend clubs in ICT. These also enhance the students' sense of responsibility through their involvement in managing the extra-curricular provision. The college has a successful history of success in design and technology competitions such as the Arkwright Trust and the Smallpiece Trust. A number of activities support the students' learning effectively through additional classes for GCSE in modern foreign languages and mathematics, booster classes for students taking the Year 7 progress tests, and summer colleges for literacy, numeracy and for gifted and talented students. In addition there is very good support for the students' personal development such as the Year 10 healthy relationships week and an industry day for Year 9 students. There is a good range of educational visits, including residential visits.
64. The college is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all and, as a result, provision is good. There is equality of access to the curriculum for all students. The principal and senior staff take an active and effective role in ensuring that all students are treated equally. There is particularly good provision for the integration of physically handicapped students into the college community, although access to the upper floors is not possible for those in wheelchairs. Students with impaired hearing are well supported and have full access to the curriculum. There is good provision for the teaching of equal opportunity topics. These are covered well in the citizenship programme and contribute to the very good relationships within the college. A particular strength is the comprehensive coverage of discrimination, prejudice and gender issues. Considerable emphasis is placed on raising the attainment of boys without ignoring the needs of the girls. Examination results of girls and boys are fully analysed. Access to ICT by both boys and girls is monitored to ensure equality. Physical education is a particular strength as clubs are open to all; a good proportion of girls follow GCSE courses and, for example, they are taught football in lessons. The college has actively developed links with groups in Plymouth through the 'Fusion Project' to support ethnic minority students. The Equal Opportunities policy does not include recent requirements highlighted in the Macpherson Report.
65. The college has good provision for the inclusion of students with special educational needs. The curriculum is available to all students on the special educational needs register. A few are disapplied from modern foreign languages in Year 11. This allows them to concentrate effectively on their other GCSE subjects. Learning opportunities are good. Setting arrangements in mathematics, science and English enable students to achieve well because materials and methods are well matched to their needs. The provision of a well-planned programme of withdrawal from lessons to support the improvement of reading and writing skills also has a good impact on the students' progress. In Years 10 and 11 the wide range of courses gives good opportunities for success in GCSE examinations. The inclusive nature of the college is illustrated by the high expectations teachers have for success in examinations by all students. These are confirmed by the above average examination entry rates and success. Individual examination plans provide effective information about each student's development and learning needs, targets and helpful methods. The arrangements for the effective deployment of the teaching assistants are also helpful. The college ensures the students receive any entitlement to special arrangements for

examinations. Good procedures exist to smooth the transfer of students moving into the college.

66. The highest attainers and those students identified by the college as able and gifted receive good teaching and achieve well. The initiatives to further extend and enhance the curriculum on a formal basis are relatively new, but increasingly effective. Students with English as an additional language have access to all subjects in the curriculum. They often exceed the targets set for them even though the targets are challenging. During the inspection, in two different subjects, students demonstrated good success, one in learning French and another making very good progress in design and technology. They often exceed the targets set for them even though the targets are challenging. During the inspection, two students with English as an additional language demonstrated very good progress in French and in systems and control in design and technology. The college monitors effectively the progress of individuals and of the group of students with English as an additional language.
67. Provision for students' personal and social education and careers guidance has been incorporated into the college's citizenship curriculum. The provision is good overall. It includes sex education, drugs education, health education, work experience and careers education. There is a good programme in Year 7 that encourages students to look at themselves, for example, in terms of healthy living and personal relationships. In their first term they have a residential experience with form tutors and heads of year, that includes aspects of adventure training. This serves well to establish peer group friendships and constructive relationships with tutors and heads of year. In Year 8, students follow the structures of 'The Real Game' which has a positive effect on students' social development. The college's health education work has received national recognition. The college health club meets weekly where students can meet the college nurse and other members of the team and learn more about health matters, and seek confidential help and guidance. The college has established a multi-disciplined 'Connexions' team, which organises the Year 10 Health Week. The 'Connexions' team is responsible for careers and guidance, citizenship and all aspects of youth provision. This is a multi-agency initiative involving over 40 professionals and health workers; the week is designed to give students advice and guidance about personal and sexual health.
68. Provision for careers education is very good and the college has received the 'Investors in Careers' Award. Students in Year 9 have good access to careers guidance; they are advised of the careers information available in the careers library and study 'Which Way Now?' in citizenship lessons. Students and parents receive good quality information about the choices available to them as they consider their subject options. Parents are able to attend two meetings. In one they have an open forum where they can discuss with the careers co-ordinator the options booklet and one where they can meet with subject heads and the 'connexions' careers advisor. The college's good links with the community provides good support for the careers programme. For example, local businesses support an Industry Day for Year 9 students and a local insurance company provides individual 20-minute mock interviews for Year 11 students. Students in Year 10 attend a one-week work experience placement. They are encouraged to arrange their own placements and many are successful in finding placements; those who do not are assisted through the Trident and college partnership. The programme is well organised, monitored and evaluated. The majority of students have indicated that they were pleased with their placements and enjoyed the experience. Students who opt to study in the sixth form receive good quality information about the courses available through the sixth form

prospectus. They receive very good guidance from subject heads and the careers advisor.

69. The college has very good links with the community and has received an 'Investors in Education Business Partnership' award. The community makes an excellent contribution to students' learning. For example, Year 9 science students visited Plymouth University and took the opportunity to use electron microscopes. Year 10 biology students visited Sparkwell Wildlife Park, sixth form art students visited the Tate Modern, Royal Academy and the British Museum, and foreign language students visit Spain. The college's very strong links with local industry and commerce give good support to the work experience programme. The college provides a wide range of adult education classes and benefits from the direct interaction with adult learners.
70. The college has very good relationships with partner institutions. The transition arrangements from Year 6 to Year 7 are very good. Staff visit the partner primary colleges and information gained from these visits is used to form tutor groups and ease pupils' transition into the college. Year 5 students visit the college for an induction day when they spend a day in tutor groups and attend taster lessons. Parents are invited to an open evening at which they receive information about the transitional arrangements and they have indicated that they are pleased with the college's transitional arrangements.
71. The provision for students' personal development is good overall. The areas of moral and social development remain stronger than those in spiritual and cultural areas, as at the last inspection. However, the college has improved provision since the last inspection. As at the last inspection, there has been no formal audit of how all subjects can contribute to personal development, but there has been much discussion with subject teams and this has resulted in greater incorporation of this aspect into schemes of work. For example, those in ICT and in history plan appropriate opportunities.
72. Spiritual development is satisfactory, although further improvement is needed, particularly in terms of coverage of religious education. As at the last inspection, the college does not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all students. Students attend one year assembly each week; assemblies contain opportunities for reflection upon the chosen thought for the week. On other days, students work in tutor groups, but these do not always develop further the weekly theme as intended. The thought for the week is displayed widely around the college. The themes chosen have a substantial spiritual dimension, and include Christian values and teachings. The revised citizenship programme contains opportunities for personal reflection and for consideration of spiritual matters, as in the 'sanctity of life' module. However, religious education is taught in the citizenship course and the programme does not provide sufficient time to ensure full coverage of the agreed syllabus. In art and design and in music, students have opportunities to reflect and develop self-awareness in their work, as in sessions where students reflected on their work in music and poetry. Work in history covers the impact of religion in earlier societies. English explores the spiritual dimension through work in literature and poetry.
73. Moral development is very good. Students demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong. The staff of the college provide good role models, and teachers have good expectations of work and behaviour; the very good behaviour seen in lessons and around the college demonstrates the effectiveness of teachers' quiet insistence of proper behaviour, and ensures a good atmosphere for learning. Students took part in



framing the college's codes of conduct. The citizenship course deals with topics such as prejudice and discrimination, crime and punishment and sexual responsibility. Work in history raises frequent moral issues, for example those faced by people in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. In physical education, students have a clear sense of fair play, whilst moral issues arising are considered in art and design, for example when studying the work of Goya. The moral dimension to texts is also a feature of work in English, whilst students studying ICT consider the balance between what can be done, and what should be done, for example in gathering information about individuals.

74. Social development is good. A strength of the college is the quality of relationships between students and with staff, which promotes high standards and values learning. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into the life and work of the college. Disaffected students have benefited from a range of activities designed to promote their social skills and feelings of self-worth. The student council and year councils involve students in exploring ways to improve the college, for example through committee work on improving the management of breaks. Students are expected to work together in lessons, sharing ideas and findings, demonstrating patience, and valuing each other's contributions. The citizenship course contains appropriate coverage of social themes, as well as providing good opportunities to develop social skills through the extensive group work in the course. The college is developing leadership programmes, as in the student access manager scheme. Here, students of all ages take responsibility for the work taking place in computer rooms and the library at break and lunchtime. Even young managers display a great maturity in handling others, helping them and ensuring that they keep to the college's code of conduct when working with computers. Their peers acknowledge their expertise and authority.
75. Cultural development is good. For example, in music, there is a strong tradition of concerts in the college and the wider community, and a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and overseas tours. The college also undertakes drama productions each year. Students are encouraged to take part in national and international events and competitions. The college has links with France, Spain, the USA and Japan. At the last inspection, the college's provisions for multi-cultural education were identified as needing improvement; the college has responded positively. Senior managers are aware of their particular responsibilities, given the essentially mono-cultural nature of the area, but have been keen to avoid 'bolt-on' solutions such as providing additional units of work in subjects. Rather, they wish to see cultural diversity promoted in the everyday life of the college. Thus work in English explores how language can distort and display multi-cultural antipathy; the students respond well to this in discussion. The themes of the thought for the day often contain references to other cultures and societies, and these are explored further through assemblies and in tutor groups. The citizenship course includes work with a project to promote greater awareness of multi-cultural life. Within subjects, art and design contains a wide range of work that looks at the art of other cultures, whilst geography shows an active development of cultural awareness of areas such as Japan and Amazonia. Music also draws upon a wide range of influences and explores the music of other cultures. The history course contains many references to different views of events, whilst modern foreign languages deals with cultural aspects of life in Spain and France, including, for example, the impact of the recent introduction of the Euro.

## **Sixth form**

76. The curriculum opportunities provided in the sixth form are very good. As in Years 7 to 11 they have emerged as a result of strong evaluative leadership from the senior management team. Opportunities are enhanced through the college's involvement with other post-16 education providers in the Plymouth area and these continue to build effectively on a widening base of co-operation.
77. Students follow courses chosen from more than 20 AS and A2 subjects. There are also AVCE courses in: health and social care; business; engineering; ICT; travel and tourism; and leisure and recreation. Students whose results at GCSE are below average can follow NVQ courses which include off-site training, work experience and key skills courses at the college in communication, application of number and ICT. The range of vocational courses constitutes a very good response to local circumstances. Traditional academic subjects such as chemistry also have good local links with the University of Plymouth and at a whole-college level there are effective partnerships with local higher education institutions. The provision for key skills is evolving. Their explicit delivery and monitoring for all students is not yet systematic although there are good opportunities for accreditation in ICT. The college is currently planning to review its arrangements for the delivery and monitoring of key skills with effect from September 2003.
78. Equal opportunity provision in the sixth form is good. Sixth form courses are open to all students who fulfil the entry requirements. The wide range of courses meets the needs of most students. The high number of students who complete them shows the suitability of these courses. The significant numbers of students who join the sixth form from other colleges are well supported. This enables them to quickly become familiar with the demands of the college and to settle in socially. Issues relating to equality of opportunity are satisfactorily covered in the citizenship programme through modules on prejudice and gender issues. These build upon work done in earlier years to reinforce and extend students' understanding.
79. Because the curriculum provision has been systematically reviewed and developed, the range of courses provides a good match to the students' aspirations and potential. A thorough programme of consultation and guidance helps to ensure appropriate choices and the very low drop out rate confirms that both provision and guidance lead to well-matched choices. In addition to examined courses there are opportunities for leisure activities, citizenship lessons, Young Enterprise competitions, debating competitions on a regional, national and international basis, and community service within the college.
80. The college has very good links with other secondary schools and colleges particularly at sixth form level. These links enable the college to widen the choice of courses available by sending some students to partner colleges and receiving some students from partner colleges. This facilitates the formation of economical groups for subjects that would otherwise be impossible to run in any single institution. The college has good links with colleges of further education and universities and this contributes positively to students' personal development.
81. Most students are actively involved in the life of the college. The sixth form council meets once a fortnight and is involved in conducting a number of surveys into the management of the college, for example students' ideas on what to include in and how to teach Years 12 and 13 citizenship programmes. A significant number of students participate and assist in the provision of extra-curricular activities; for example, sixth form students attend physical education lessons and help teachers in these lessons. They have organised a fun sports physical education lesson for Year

7 and a jump rope competition for Year 8 students; both events raised significant amounts of money for Children in Need and the British Heart Foundation. Students are given many good opportunities to take responsibility, which encourages them to become independent, caring and responsible citizens. The college also provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities where students take the opportunities afforded to take part in the arts, drama and sport, often at a high level.

82. Students undertaking both vocational courses and A-level studies receive good careers advice and appropriate work-related education. Students take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme and in the last academic year were judged as one of the top entrants in the Plymouth area. Careers guidance is provided through the citizen programme, and group and individual counselling by tutors and 'Connexions' careers advisers. Students take part in a day with tutors, which is designed to assist students with university application forms. The college has good links with outside agencies and is a partner with the Tamar Valley Consortium, to support vocational education.
83. Good support for students with special educational and individual learning needs continues into the sixth form. There are effective links between subject teachers, pastoral and specialist staff to support these students' progress. Students with special educational needs comprise 5.4 per cent of sixth form students. Those with statements of special educational needs comprise 2.7 per cent. The range of need includes general learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties, hearing impairment, behavioural difficulties and physical disability. Students have access to the full breadth of the sixth form provision and achieve as well as other students. Students' progress is monitored well. There is good liaison between special educational needs teachers, support staff, subject teachers and sixth form pastoral staff. Where appropriate, there is targeted support in lessons.
84. The provision for personal development of students is good. The general studies programme includes work on religious education, and students also take part in a one-day programme of additional study organised by a local university. Work in subjects such as geography and art and design explores spiritual issues. Theatre studies students took part in a stimulating and thought-provoking discussion on the existence of God. Work in English includes thoughtful reflective work on relationships and thoughts on death in the Great War. As in the main school, students are encouraged to display a clear sense of right and wrong, and to demonstrate mature and responsible behaviour in their work. Moral issues are explored in a range of subjects, including ICT, theatre studies and English, for example, where students study concepts such as the abuse of power, relationships and war. The provision for cultural development is also good. Sixth form students work well together, and the recent changes to sixth form courses have resulted in students taking greater responsibility for their own learning. This is a key strength of the various AVCE courses. Students and staff enjoy good relationships that promote increasing independence.

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

85. Students are provided with good educational and personal support and they state that they are happy and secure. The college's pastoral system is well organised and has a positive impact on students' learning. There are good procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and positive behaviour are very good. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are good.

86. The college has in place a health and safety policy that meets statutory requirements. Procedures for general risk assessment and fire risk assessments are in place, and satisfactory inspections are carried out on a regular basis. First aid procedures are good, there are appropriate numbers of qualified first aid staff, and good records of accident and injuries are maintained. Overall the college is successful in providing a safe working environment for staff and students. A small number of minor areas of concern were brought to the attention of the principal during the inspection. Overall, arrangements for child protection are good. A senior member of staff is the designated teacher and has received appropriate training on child protection procedures. All staff are provided with a copy of the college's child protection policy, which provides guidance in the recognition of child abuse. The college has good links with outside agencies and the designated teacher attends case conferences as appropriate.
87. The college's pastoral system is well organised. Form tutors and heads of years know their students well and are responsive to students' needs, both inside and outside the classroom. Students feel valued by staff and continuity of care is enhanced by their form tutors throughout students' time in the college. The majority of students say that this has increased their confidence in approaching staff should they have any problems of either a personal or academic nature, and that appropriate advice and guidance would be forthcoming. However, students in one year group, where there has been a significant change-over of staff, have not yet formed stable relationships and indicate that they would be reluctant to approach their tutors with personal problems. Students have access to the 'Connexions' counsellor on a confidential basis should they have any problems that may have an adverse effect on their learning. Overall, the pastoral system provides students with a good level of academic and personal support. This enables students to concentrate on their lessons and has a positive impact on their learning.
88. Students with special educational needs respond well to the opportunities for personal development. In terms of their overall personal and learning progress they receive the same provision as other students. Their personal development is enhanced by the chances to take part in small group and pair work. They also benefit from the friendly and supportive atmosphere of the learning support area. Here they can talk to staff about their lessons and how they are getting on in college life in general. Year 7 students talk most appreciatively about this dimension of the college's provision.
89. The learning support department has effective systems for identifying and supporting students in need of extra help. There is close contact with feeder primary schools and teachers from the college attend Year 6 annual reviews for pupils with statements. Assessment on entry is extensive, detailed and used accurately to identify and deal with learning needs. These assessments also inform the individual education plans that effectively ensure subject teachers know and understand the students' needs. Subject teachers also contribute to annual reviews. The liaison with the services and agencies provided by the local education authority ensures that the students benefit from a wide range of support for their different needs.
90. The college provides a welcoming environment in which students with English as an additional language can feel confident and valued. The students work together well and enjoy each other's company. Students respect differences in culture and the feelings, values and beliefs of other groups.
91. Overall, the college has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Form tutors monitor registers and pursue reasons for absence; if no

reasons are forthcoming they advise heads of year, who then make further inquiries involving parents should this be necessary. Some students who have poor attendance records are targeted for first day contact if absent from morning registration. In an effort to reduce truancy, random attendance checks are undertaken during the college day. One of the assistant principals meets with the educational welfare officer on a weekly basis, at which time they discuss and agree appropriate action to be taken in relation to instances of poor attendance.

92. The college has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. There is a well-established behaviour policy and a code of conduct that provides a system of rewards and sanctions. The rewards system is popular with students and the majority of students readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of poor behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour are notified to heads of years through the college's referral system. The college maintains good records of poor behaviour; these are used when producing half-term monitoring reports relating to students' attitudes and behaviour across all subjects. The college has very good procedures for supporting students with challenging behaviour and those who are at the greatest risk of exclusion. The system is referred to as the 'Bridge Project'. When students are placed on the project, they are provided with an individual programme of study and achievement targets. Staff, students and parents are involved in the planning, development and review of these programmes and targets. Some of the students have been placed on training schemes outside of the mainstream of the National Curriculum. Overall, this system is successful in raising the self-esteem of these students and the college is confident that the 'bridge' has prevented a number of students from being excluded, and has enabled some students to gain formal qualifications. The college have very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. The anti-bullying policy makes clear that bullying will not be tolerated; parents are informed of instances of bullying, and should the bullying continue the bully will be excluded. The anti-bullying policy is communicated to students through the bullying topic in social education; the tutorial programme encourages all students to take positive action against bullying and assemblies are used to reinforce the anti-bullying message.
93. Procedures for assessment are good overall. The college has worked assiduously on this feature of its provision since September 2000. A very extensive process of consultation, trial and review (that included parental responses) has led to a reformed system. This includes a National Curriculum or GCSE assessment each half term, an assessment of each pupil's effort and whether pupils are on track to achieve their target levels and grades. An innovative development is a comprehensive assessment of the students' key skills. The college is increasingly making effective use of new technologies to assist the recording of this information. In geography, science and physical education the procedures used have a strong impact on the students' progress and standards. For example, in GCSE physical education, students know the quality of their work and what they need to produce to achieve their grades.
94. Although the new system represents a significant development the college is not yet taking sufficient advantage of its potential to support progress and raise standards. There is a lack of consistency across subjects and in marking. Information is not always used effectively to reinforce students' understanding of their targets and how to achieve them. For example, in mathematics there is a lack of consistent, constructive comments in marking. However, the new system makes a more rigorous approach to monitoring and supporting progress towards targets more achievable. This was very well exemplified following recent Year 11 reports. The

parents of students making strong efforts or achieving above their targets received letters of commendation. The parents of students who were making inadequate efforts or working below their targets were contacted for further consultation to support the students.

95. The overall strength of the curriculum confirms good use of assessment information to support the developments. For example, the science department has developed its teaching and support for enquiry-based work, having noted deficiencies in this aspect in older students. The analysis of standards on entry showed the need to improve and increase the time allocated to the teaching of English and this has been done. The range of courses offered for 14 to 16 year olds is a very good response to recognising the need to broaden provision for lower attaining students.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

96. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. During the second year of their courses in Year 13, students' awareness and understanding of their potential, and how to fulfil it, are good. It is enhanced by review interviews with members of the college leadership team. Their end of Year 12 examinations provide a good basis for setting targets.
97. The systematic setting and monitoring of targets in Year 12, however, is underdeveloped. For example, students in English do not have any target grades. The college is not making enough use of previous results to set targets and expectations and to track students' progress towards their targets. There is, however, good practice in geography, design and technology and chemistry. A systematic review of progress is also a good feature of vocational courses. Although there are whole-college systems for reviewing progress during Year 12, they lack the systematic rigour of those that the college is introducing in Years 7 to 11. A 'Reassurance Evening' takes place during the autumn to review how well students have settled into the sixth form.
98. The college evaluates its overall standards in examinations and also assesses each subject's added value data. The marking of students' work is satisfactory. The very good range of the college's curriculum confirms the good use of assessment to inform curriculum planning. Senior managers and those with sixth form responsibilities evaluate the appropriateness of their programmes to match the needs of applicants and make appropriate changes.

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

99. The college provides very good and carefully structured advice, support and guidance. There is an extensive application process for Year 11 students that includes lectures, open evenings, interviews and formal applications. Before starting on their chosen courses each student's GCSE results are reviewed in light of their chosen options to ensure students are well suited to their courses. The very low drop-out rate confirms the effectiveness of this process. A well thought through induction process effectively supports the transition to post-16 studies. For example, students evaluate how they and their peers manage their non-directed time and their working patterns. Students from other institutions integrate successfully. Citizenship lessons are the source of very good advice and guidance. Students also receive very good advice and support for higher education applications. The college's

'Connexions' co-ordinator – in conjunction with the head of sixth form and pastoral staff – ensures the effective delivery of supportive guidance. There is a well-established programme of consultations, work experience, residential and day visits to higher education providers and interviews. About 75 per cent of each cohort successfully progress to higher education. The writing of personal statements starts in Year 12 and is well supported by tutors who also provide confidential references. Tutors monitor how well students are coping with their workload through individual tutorials.

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

100. The college's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall and the college maintains very good links with the community as a whole. Since the last inspection the college has worked hard to encourage parents to become involved in the life of the college, but has had only moderate success. Approximately 20 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and 15 parents attended the parents' meeting. Parents' views of the college are positive. Most parents are pleased with the progress that their children make in their learning, the quality of teaching, the expectation that their children will work hard and the standards of behaviour in college. Parents also indicate that their children enjoy coming to college, that the college is helping them to become more mature and responsible and the college is well led and managed. Evidence from the inspection mostly confirms these positive views of the college. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about the college, including: the information they receive about their children's progress; that the college does not work closely with parents; their children do not receive sufficient homework; and, homework provision is erratic. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the college works hard to involve parents in the life of the college but with limited success. The college has in place a homework policy and is working to ensure that parents are aware of the homework that needs to be completed by their children. However, there is some inconsistency between subjects in terms of the effective and consistent use of homework. Inspectors also agree with parents that there are some inconsistencies in the quality of students' reports.
101. Overall, parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. The college works hard to involve parents in the life of the college; for example, they send out focused questionnaires to ensure parents' views are taken into account in the college's decision-making process. There is good parental support for concerts and musical activities: there is a 'music support group' which helps organise concert arrangements. Heads of years have good relationships with parents and indicate that they receive strong parental support when required. There is a small but active Friends of the College Association who run the college shop and arrange social and fund-raising events. The monies raised by the association have been used to providing additional learning resources, which have had a positive impact on students' learning.
102. The learning support area has good links with the parents of students with special educational needs. Telephone contact frequently takes place. Parents receive copies of individual educational plans and discuss them with the staff. As well as formal meetings, parents are able to visit the staff on a more informal 'drop in' basis. Their attendance at annual reviews is good.
103. The range and quality of information provided for parents are good. The college prospectus and annual governors' reports meet statutory requirements, and provide a wide range of information about the college and its activities. Thrice termly

newsletters and letters about specific events inform parents of current college issues. Parents are invited to one parents' meeting each year and parents of Year 9 students have a specific meeting to discuss their children's options; attendance at these meetings are good. The college has good arrangements to involve parents of students who have special educational needs in the development and review of their individual education plans. Parents receive two interim reports and a full report on their children's progress each year. The format of students' reports has changed significantly; parents have been advised about these changes and have been invited to comment on them. Overall, students' reports are satisfactory; however, there are some inconsistencies: for example the key skills comments in Year 11 Spanish reports do not make clear to parents what their children can do. The college does not report religious education as a separate subject and does not meet statutory requirements in this respect.

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

104. The leadership provided by the principal is very good overall. It is excellent in terms of giving clear educational direction to the work of the college. The senior management team and the governing body give very good support to ensure that the college manages a number of initiatives very well while keeping the day-to-day work of the college functioning efficiently. The priorities established in the college development plan have been carefully considered and are appropriate for the college's current development. There are very good systems and strategies in place to monitor and evaluate the success in meeting these priorities. The college has maintained satisfactory improvement from an already high base at the time of the last inspection. The college's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are good. For example, the college monitors its examination performance very closely and quickly took action when A-level results dropped in 2000. The quality of teaching and learning is also reviewed closely and this has led to an improvement in both areas.
105. The impact of this quality of leadership and management is seen in the effectiveness of the college in its work in general. Teaching and learning are good and improving further. Students achieve well. Their results reflect this and the college adds good value to their education. The college is evaluative in all its work. As a consequence there is a good awareness of the areas that need further improvement. The college is innovative. This is most clearly seen in its work in ICT and its work in providing a curriculum that suits all its students. The college's work is supported by excellent financial management that provides a secure framework for the work it does. The college is an improving institution as a result of the quality of evaluation undertaken, seen in its response to the last inspection and other improvements, for example in middle management.
106. There are very good systems and strategies in place for the evaluation of the college's work and there is very good capacity and commitment to improve further. Heads of subject departments and year heads demonstrate a strong commitment to raising standards further and their overall contribution is good. The college has taken a positive approach to performance management. Procedures are satisfactory. As a result, the processes for identifying and spreading good teaching practice are developing well. The college is well organised. It deals effectively with the bureaucratic demands made upon its administration. Targets for whole-college improvement are realistic and challenging and are based upon increasingly accurate information about students' attainment levels. Targets for students are being established to good effect in raising standards. At present, this aspect of the college's work is developing well since being given a priority in September 2000.



There is some very good practice, for example in science, but it is not yet embedded in the day-to-day practice of all departments.

107. The college has undertaken a number of initiatives recently. For example, the science department has developed its teaching and support for enquiry-based work, having noted deficiencies in this aspect in older students. The analysis of standards on entry showed the need to improve and increase the time allocated to the teaching of English and this has been done. The range of courses offered for 14 to 16 year olds is a very good response to recognising the need to broaden provision for lower attaining students. By far the biggest initiative has been the development of ICT to underpin the work of the college in general. This has been very successful and has in turn led to successful developments, for example the initiative to equip a class of students with laptop computers that has fundamentally changed their approach to learning. Other changes have been in response to government initiatives, for example in setting up and teaching an expanded AS-level curriculum, and the college has responded effectively. Governors are centrally involved in the decision-making processes and make a good contribution to new approaches and to evaluating the effects.
108. The college's approach to the previous inspection report was positive and the college has, in the main, responded successfully to the key issues identified in that report. A wider range of teaching styles is used generally. However, there are some classrooms where the number of students present in the small space available constrains the teacher's approach and determines that a more formal, prescriptive approach is adopted. There has been satisfactory improvement in providing for students' spiritual development, notwithstanding the unsatisfactory provision of religious education, and good improvement regarding their cultural development. The provision for ICT has been transformed. The college still does not fully meet the requirement for collective worship. A new principal has been appointed since the last inspection and has identified other issues central to the development of the college and raising standards. For example, information about the college's performance is now judged using better quality data, leading to more precise targets. Teaching and learning are now more rigorously monitored and evaluated and the quality of both has been raised. Underachievement is now identified and addressed more successfully. The leadership in some departments has improved and this is resulting in higher standards, for example in English.
109. The process of continued improvement is guided by a good quality college development plan. It is a good working document, giving appropriate levels of detail about how the college's priorities are to be met and how financial and staffing resources are to be used to meet these priorities. The cycle of college development planning is effective and ensures full consultation with staff and the governing body. It provides an effective framework for evaluating the success of initiatives taken.
110. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the college is very good. Governors are mainly effective in fulfilling their statutory duties. However, the college does not meet fully the legal requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship throughout the college and the arrangements for teaching religious education are unsatisfactory. Governors take an active role in the leadership of the college and make a positive contribution to the decisions that are taken. They have a very good understanding of the strengths of the college and those areas requiring further development. The governing body, in close co-operation with the senior managers, deals well with the bureaucratic demands made upon the college. Governors are in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the

college to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided.

111. The college is administered well and very good use is made of ICT. Daily routines operate smoothly and unobtrusively and the college deals well with the bureaucratic demands made upon it. The process of financial planning is good. Spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied very effectively in the college's use of resources. The governing body's finance committee has a very good level of awareness of the financial implications of meeting the planned priorities and it plans the annual budget accordingly. Financial administration is excellent and ensures that the principles of best value are applied rigorously in obtaining goods and services. There is a satisfactory programme of external audit and the college responds positively to auditors' reports. The strategic use of resources is very good and specific grants are used appropriately.
112. The management of special educational needs is good. The specific grant is used effectively for its designated purpose. An interim arrangement exists for the management of special educational needs with two teachers sharing the responsibilities of the special educational needs co-ordinator pending a new appointment. The responsibilities and tasks are being discharged well. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately. There is good and effective liaison between the specialist staff, subject teachers, external agencies and parents. A member of the governing body takes an active interest in the work of the special educational needs department as do the principal and her senior management colleagues. The college's policy for special educational needs is currently under review. The requirements of the code of practice are met.
113. The present post holders have worked with great commitment, with their support staff, for example in setting up the literacy strategy's progress units and to reorganise the arrangements for individual education plans. The organisation of records for each student is very good. The support assistants are integral members of the learning support provision. Several have additional qualifications. They work well as a team, showing initiative and responsibility when previewing each day's arrangements. They deal with the students with sensitivity but also have high expectations. The strong team ethos of the teaching and non-teaching staff is a significant factor in the effectiveness of the department. The area does not, however, monitor its effectiveness as formally and rigorously as it might, for example in reviewing students' progress socially and behaviourally, or their attendance and their standards.
114. The college identifies language needs well when students with English as an additional language enter the college and notes the student's proficiency in the home language; the students may be entered for GCSE in the home language when appropriate. There are good systems in place for supporting the students in the college, initially through learning support. The college analyses the data on student progress sensitively and can trace the attainment of learners of English as an additional language from their entry into the college.
115. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials are good. There is a very good ratio of computers to students in the college and in general the machines are less than two years old, well maintained and have modern software. Through partnership arrangements, good use is made of this facility by local primary colleges and the local universities who train teachers. The college's technology status is well demonstrated in the manner in which the computers form an integral part of the teaching and learning process. In English, the department's book stock is excellent

and the ICT facility good. In mathematics, the book resources and ICT are good, and in science the book stock, equipment and ICT provision are very good. In most subjects students have textbooks to take home and there is also a good supply of class sets of most texts. In geography there is a good stock of books and equipment and ICT facilities are very good. In art and design there is a very good stock of modern books in the art rooms and general equipment is of good quality. The ICT supply is also good and well used by students to enhance learning.

116. Overall, the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good in the main college. It is very good in English, science, modern foreign languages and geography. In the last two years 26 members of staff have left the college and all have been replaced. Some new members are on temporary contracts. Recent recruitment has not been easy but there is a good balance of youth and experience across the curriculum. There is concern about the splitting of classes between two teachers, particularly in history where the current situation is unsatisfactory, but it does occur in other departments too.
117. New members of staff have a very good and comprehensive induction programme under the responsibility of a senior member of staff. New teachers have a departmental and a college mentor and this is effective in ensuring that they adapt quickly to the needs of the college. The college has effective procedures for supporting the professional development of teachers. There is a wide-ranging in-service training programme, which is carefully planned to meet the needs of individual teachers in fulfilling and developing their roles in the college.
118. Overall, the college's accommodation is satisfactory, with some strengths and weaknesses. This is similar to the situation found at the time of the last inspection. The college comprises a range of buildings of various age and design set in large spacious grounds. Many of these buildings are expensive to maintain, particularly due to leaking roofs. There have been some significant improvements since the last inspection, including disability access, the development of a new library that includes a multi-media resource centre, and the refurbishment of a number of classrooms to provide a improved learning environment. The college has made every effort to improve the accommodation and learning environment within the constraints of the college budget.
119. The suitability of the accommodation for particular subjects is variable. In some subjects, for example English and mathematics, whilst some of the teaching areas are cramped for the number of students using them, overall provision is satisfactory. There is very good provision in science and ICT where rooms are spacious and give good access to the subject. Provision for geography and modern foreign languages is good, and whilst there is good indoor space and there are large playing fields available for physical education, there is a health and safety issue relating to the outdoor hard surfaced playing courts which are not being used at the present time. However, whilst this has necessitated some changes in the physical education lesson programme, it has not restricted the delivery of the National Curriculum in this subject. There are some weaknesses in the accommodation, for example in design and technology where the size of the classrooms limit practical activities. In music, classrooms are cramped and have poor soundproofing and the areas for rehearsing and performing are inadequate.
120. The college hall, which is also used as a dining room, is too small for the number of students in the college. Senior members of staff have spent much time and energy in varying the lunchtime arrangements, but they are still far from ideal: students still have

to queue outside the dining hall and have no shelter in the event of inclement weather. Students have nowhere to store their bags and therefore have to take them into classrooms, where in many instances space is already restricted.

### ***Leadership and management of the sixth form***

121. The governors, principal, senior management and head of sixth form ensure a very clear educational direction to this aspect of the college's work. Very good procedures are being developed to monitor and evaluate the performance of students and teachers, but there is still work to do in developing more precise target setting to chart the progress of students in Year 12. For example, students in English do not have any target grades. Overall, the college is not making enough use of previous results to set targets and expectations and to track students' progress towards their targets. Although there are whole-college systems for reviewing progress during Year 12 they lack the systematic rigour of those that the college is introducing in Years 7 to 11.
122. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted in line with the college's aims. There is a low drop-out rate at the end of Year 12 because students are suited to and satisfied with their courses. They receive good support and guidance to ensure that the courses meet their needs and aspirations. A strength of the provision lies in the effectiveness of careers education and the guidance students receive about future courses and career opportunities. The management of the sixth form funding is very good and meets the cost of staffing. The quality of leadership and management provided by subject leaders is good.
123. The governors have a good understanding of the issues facing sixth form provision. The curriculum committee of the governing body has been centrally concerned in the college's development of sixth form courses, and through this committee the governing body as a whole has developed a good understanding of the strengths and areas needing further improvement in the sixth form provision. The governing body does not fulfil its statutory duties in ensuring the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is fulfilled.

### ***Resources***

124. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials are very good. The library resource centre is a well-designed central area and is used to good effect by students for presentation of work and research. Research is carried out well using the library's resources of books and the very good Internet access available. The opening hours of the library extend well beyond the normal college day and many students make good use of this opportunity. The facility is jointly provided with the local council, and the books and equipment are used by people in the local community. This joint arrangement greatly extends the books available to the college and the community. The library book stock is good in most areas but there are limited reference books in some departments, for example in science, where there are no periodicals. The book resources in English are excellent. Other teaching resources are very good in science where there is a wide range of good quality equipment available to the students in addition to ICT. Design and technology is also well served, as are mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and geography. Accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory.
125. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and there is a good balance of experience in all subject areas. Despite recruitment difficulties, the college has been able to ensure that the teachers

are appropriately qualified and has maintained a good balance of experience and more recent entrants to the profession. The college has in place very good arrangements for the induction and support for newly qualified teachers. This is in line with the high priority placed on the care and development of teaching and support staff. The level of support staffing is also good with very good technical help in ICT and science. The library is also well staffed and this enables students to make best use of the learning opportunities available from the very good facilities.

126. The principal and governors have taken appropriate action to create a strong and effective senior management team for the sixth form. The current leadership has good capacity to improve further the provision for sixth form students. There is good teaching provision in the sixth form by a committed group of teachers. Most students state that they are able to follow the courses they wish to from the existing options. As a result, the large majority of students complete the courses they start. The college's sixth form is cost effective.

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

**127. In order to improve standards further, the principal, staff and governors should:**

- (1) Raise standards in religious education and ensure that sufficient time is given to cover the local agreed syllabus by:
  - clarifying the place of religious education in the wider citizenship curriculum and providing sufficient time to teach religious education fully;
  - ensuring that the agreed syllabus programmes of study are taught;
  - ensuring that assessment and reporting procedures for the subject are put in place.(Paragraphs 223-226)
- (2) Improve the provision for teaching of history by:
  - reducing the number of classes taught by more than one teacher;
  - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching in the department more systematically to ensure existing good practice is extended further;
  - continuing to improve the scheme for assessing students in Years 7 to 9 to ensure consistency of assessment.(Paragraphs 187,192)
- (3) Improve the efficiency with which the college communicates with parents/carers by:
  - ensuring that parents/carers are familiar with the college's procedures for making contact;
  - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of current procedures for following up complaints and suggestions from parents/carers.(Paragraph 100)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Improve the use of information gathered from assessing students to set them more precise targets. (Paragraph 97)
- (2) Monitor students' progress through their courses more systematically. (Paragraph 97)
- (3) Raise attainment in psychology by:
  - monitoring and evaluating teaching more formally and systematically to share best practice;
  - improving assessment procedures and using the information gained to set targets for students;
  - ensuring that students have a clear indication of the progress they are making;
  - increasing the range of teaching strategies used in order to involve students more closely in their own learning.(Paragraph 289)

**In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to:**

- Meet fully the requirements relating to providing a daily act of collective worship for all students. (Paragraph 72)
- Attend to health and safety issues brought to the notice of the school. (Paragraph 86)

## **THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS ATTENDING THE HEARING SUPPORT CENTRE (HSC)**

The Hearing Support Centre (HSC) is very effective in providing high quality support to students and to subject staff. The work of the HSC contributes significantly to the inclusive philosophy and practice of the college. Currently the HSC supports 17 students, all of whom have statements of educational need, in accessing all aspects of college life. The Centre is centrally funded by the local education authority (LEA) and is supported and administered by the college. The Centre has two teachers, both qualified teachers of the deaf. The team of teaching assistants and communication support workers are all well trained and experienced in specialist support for hearing impairment, including the use of sign language. The audiologist from the local hospital and a speech therapist specialising in hearing impairment provide additional support through their weekly visits. Further support is available from specialists within the psychological service and social services. The Centre is supported and monitored by the LEA senior advisory teacher for hearing impairment and by senior college staff.

### **Strengths**

- The good and sometimes very good progress and achievements of the students. Students achieve well in lessons and over time, with older students gaining good and very good results in accredited courses.
- The very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships of the students. Students are confident, work hard, concentrate well in lessons and establish good relationships with staff and other students within the college.
- The high quality and effective support and teaching provided to students in lessons and in the centre. Good liaison with subject teachers enables HSC staff to focus their support effectively to enable students to participate fully in lessons across the curriculum. Very well planned curriculum support lessons in the centre ensure students are fully prepared to actively participate in future lessons. Where appropriate additional work is provided in the Centre for students who require extra help with, for example, English.
- The high quality pastoral care provided by the Centre. Students have opportunities to mix with other deaf students and deaf culture as they wish. They are also provided with opportunities to bring their hearing friends to the Centre at lunchtimes to socialise.
- The good quality monitoring, recording and reporting of students' progress. HSC staff know each student very well. Effective assessments on entry support staff, with the student and parents, in setting very appropriate targets in individual education plans. These are regularly reviewed and updated, and provide a good record of each student's achievement. The information from an appropriate range of annual tests undertaken by students is used well to inform target setting and to track progress. Statutory annual reviews are useful documents that inform future teaching and learning needs. Centre staff attend all college events involving students or parents to provide signed support. In addition to pastoral support from year group tutors and year heads, further counselling and support for students is available from Centre staff. A mentor system, where older students look after younger students, is encouraged.
- Effective links with parents. Staff in the Centre actively maintain regular contact with parents, through telephone calls, letters and the home/college diary. Parents are made welcome and feel able to call into the Centre whenever there is a need. Meetings of the parent support group enable information exchanges and invited speakers regularly attend.
- Strong and effective leadership and management of the Centre. The joint Centre co-ordinators provide very effective leadership and organisation that enable support to be targeted as effectively as possible. The centre development and improvement plan is



good and appropriately reflects and informs the college development plan. Continuous staff development organised by the co-ordinators ensures both Centre and main college staff are kept well updated in their teaching.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Increased liaison and sharing of good practice with the special needs department. Currently, the very good format for individual education plans used by the Centre is different to those used by the special needs department.

The data from assessments completed on entry to the college shows students to have a wide and diverse range of abilities and learning needs. Support is effectively tailored for each student to allow maximum access to academic, vocational and social aspects of college life. Records show that students achieve well in their GCSEs and a number go on to sixth form and further and higher education. Given the severity and complexity of hearing loss of all of the students, these achievements are impressive. Students achieve very well because the quality of support is very good and is highly effective. Where it is required students receive 100 per cent signed support within lessons. Because HSC staff liaise closely with subject staff and maintain subject schemes of work and lesson plans and have prior knowledge of the lesson, they are able to plan and target their support so that it is appropriate and very effective. New subject-specific vocabulary is introduced and concepts reinforced during lessons in the Centre, ensuring students have maximum understanding during subject lessons. Very good relationships with staff support students in being confident to ask questions and offer ideas and opinions. When appropriate, HSC staff provide modified worksheets and materials to support subject lessons. Care is taken to ensure students are as independent in their learning as possible, and good examples were seen of students conferring with hearing students about their work during lessons. In a geography lesson one hearing impaired Year 11 student provided good support to a hearing peer who was finding the task set difficult.

Students supported by the HSC show very good attitudes to their learning. They are keen to learn, concentrate well and are confident to ask if unsure. Effective liaison with primary colleges ensures the transition to college is as smooth as possible because students are well prepared. Students take care in presenting their work and they are proud of their achievements. Subject staff are well informed about the needs of the students and are comfortable in using radio aids and in having support staff working alongside them in the classroom. Because all staff and students receive deaf awareness training, support is accepted as a natural part of lessons. Very good relationships with other students and staff support students in being confident in lessons, around the college and in talking to visitors. For example, one student gave a presentation to his English class using an interactive whiteboard.

The management and organisation of the Centre and the support provided are very effective and provide a flexible approach that can adapt to meet individual student needs. Policies and procedures are clearly set out and accessible. The new internal intranet system (using computers) is providing further opportunities for the sharing of information between staff. Very good information on the progress and achievements of students is well maintained and up to date, providing accurate information that effectively supports teaching and learning. The very comprehensive and effective range of professional development for college staff provided by Centre staff contributes well to effective inclusion. The very appropriate range of professional development for Centre assistants is highly effective in maintaining the high level of quality support they provide to students. The attractive and well-maintained accommodation in the centre is appropriate to the needs of the students, walls are sound-proofed and well insulated. An appropriate range of equipment is available, is well used and

monitored by Centre staff and is made available to subject teachers. For example, all videos can now be sub-titled allowing access for all students.

Staff from the HSC liaise regularly with staff from the special needs department. However, currently, each department has its own format for individual education plans. It would be helpful for subject staff if there could be a common format. The opportunities for the two departments to share good practice should be further developed. Since the last inspection the HSC has continued to build upon the good practice acknowledged in the report. Provision for hearing impaired students is now very good.

## PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

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

|  |              |     |
|--|--------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed   | Years 7 - 11 | 161 |
|  | Sixth form   | 63  |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students |              | 53  |

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

|  | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|--|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
|--|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|

#### Years 7 - 11

|            |   |    |    |    |   |   |   |
|------------|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|
| Number     | 6 | 35 | 70 | 49 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 4 | 22 | 43 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

#### Sixth form

|            |   |    |    |    |   |   |   |
|------------|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|
| Number     | 1 | 22 | 27 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 1 | 35 | 43 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

### Information about the college's students

| Students on the college's roll  | Y7 - 11 | Sixth form |
|---|---------|------------|
| Number of students on the college's roll                                | 1236    | 296        |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 93      | 10         |

| Special educational needs  | Y7 - 11 | Sixth form |
|--|---------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs        | 37      | 8          |
| Number of students on the college's special educational needs register | 212     | 17         |

| English as an additional language                         | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 17             |

| Student mobility in the last college year                                       | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission | 21             |

|   |
|---|
| Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving |
|---|

|    |
|----|
| 18 |
|----|

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

|                           | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| College data              | 7.6 |
| National comparative data | 7.7 |

### Unauthorised absence

|                           | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| College data              | 0.8 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

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

|  | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 2001 | 134  | 114   | 248   |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results         |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above   | Boys     | 75      | 101         | 107     |
|   | Girls    | 79      | 77          | 89      |
|   | Total    | 154     | 178         | 196     |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | College  | 62 (75) | 72 (68)     | 79 (63) |
|   | National | 64 (63) | 66 (66)     | 66 (60) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | College  | 30 (37) | 43 (39)     | 28 (27) |
|   | National | 31 (28) | 43 (42)     | 33 (30) |

| Teachers' Assessments                         |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above   | Boys     | 93      | 102         | 117     |
|   | Girls    | 88      | 97          | 105     |
|   | Total    | 181     | 199         | 222     |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | College  | 73 (64) | 80 (71)     | 90 (69) |
|   | National | 65 (64) | 68 (66)     | 64 (62) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | College  | 24 (23) | 42 (48)     | 36 (29) |
|   | National | 31 (31) | 42 (39)     | 33 (29) |

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

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

| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
|  | 2001 | 119  | 125   | 244   |

| GCSE results  |          | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of students achieving the standard specified    | Boys     | 56                       | 115                   | 118                   |
|   | Girls    | 79                       | 122                   | 125                   |
|   | Total    | 135                      | 237                   | 243                   |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | College  | 55 (53)                  | 97 (95)               | 99 (98)               |
|   | 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 student | College  | 42.1 (42)        |
|                                 | National | 39.1 (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 students who achieved all those they studied | College  | N/a    | N/a            |
|  | National |        | N/a            |

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

| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
|   | 2001 | 40   | 44    | 84    |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent |        |      | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent |        |     |
|---|---|--------|------|--|--------|-----|
|   | Male  | Female | All  | Male   | Female | All |
| College                                 | 17.8  | 17.5   | 17.6 | 3.0  | 5.3    | 4.4 |
| National                                | 17.8  | 18.6   | 18.2 | 2.6  | 2.9    | 2.7 |

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

| Vocational qualifications  |         | Number | % success rate |
|--|---------|--------|----------------|
| Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or | College | 27     | 93             |

|  |          |  |      |
|--|----------|--|------|
| units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied | National |  | 73.2 |
|--|----------|--|------|

## Ethnic background of students

|                                 | No of students |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage      | 1              |
| Black – African heritage        | 1              |
| Black – other                   | 0              |
| Indian                          | 0              |
| Pakistani                       | 0              |
| Bangladeshi                     | 0              |
| Chinese                         | 0              |
| White                           | 1510           |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 28             |

## Exclusions in the last college year

|                              | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage   | 1            | 0         |
| Black – African heritage     | 0            | 0         |
| Black – other                | 0            | 0         |
| Indian                       | 0            | 0         |
| Pakistani                    | 0            | 0         |
| Bangladeshi                  | 0            | 0         |
| Chinese                      | 0            | 0         |
| White                        | 17           | 0         |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0            | 0         |

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 86.6 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 17.9 |

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Total number of education support staff | 44   |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 1092 |

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 75 |
|---|----|

### Average teaching group size: Y7 – 11

|             |      |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 19.2 |
| Key Stage 4 | 16.4 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2000/2001 |
|----------------|-----------|

|  | £       |
|--|---------|
| Total income                               | 4635463 |
| Total expenditure                          | 4640235 |
| Expenditure per student                    | 3115    |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 101321  |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 96549   |

## Recruitment of teachers

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years     | 26 FTE |
| Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years | 24FTE  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)  | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)                           | 2 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |



*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1500

Number of questionnaires returned

282

### Percentage of responses in each category

|   | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|---|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes college.   | 28             | 64            | 7                | 1                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in college.  | 35             | 59            | 4                | 0                 | 2          |
| Behaviour in the college is good.   | 22             | 64            | 7                | 1                 | 5          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                               | 20             | 50            | 21               | 5                 | 4          |
| The teaching is good.   | 23             | 63            | 5                | 1                 | 7          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                           | 19             | 52            | 23               | 4                 | 1          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem. | 42             | 51            | 5                | 1                 | 1          |
| The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 54             | 41            | 4                | 1                 | 1          |
| The college works closely with parents.   | 21             | 55            | 15               | 4                 | 5          |
| The college is well led and managed.  | 26             | 57            | 8                | 2                 | 7          |
| The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 29             | 62            | 4                | 1                 | 4          |
| The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 33             | 51            | 5                | 2                 | 8          |

|   |
|---|
| <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b> |
|---|

## ENGLISH

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

### Strengths

- Strong leadership of the department encourages high standards.
- Teaching is good; there is much very good teaching.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment is inconsistent and does not inform students enough on how to improve.
- Students' involvement in their learning is insufficient.

128. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for students at the age of 14 are broadly in line with the national average and below the national average for schools taking students from similar backgrounds. The average points score in English was just below that in mathematics and science in the 2001 National Curriculum tests. The results are in line with the national trend but are inconsistent over time.
129. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, English results at grades A\*-C were below the national average and below the national average for similar schools. Results for grades A\*-G were in line with the national average and include a slightly higher entry than nationally. Results in English literature were above the national average and were based on a higher entry than nationally. Results in tests and GCSE represent good achievement since they are higher than would be expected from the students' attainments when they entered the college.
130. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment by the end of Year 9 is average. This represents good achievement and improving standards, because, when the students joined the college, their overall standards were below average. Reading, in particular, has improved, showing particularly good achievement. Most students have a sound knowledge and understanding of literacy skills by the time they have been in the college for three years. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion and they are keen and confident speakers in formal situations. Listening skills are less developed especially when the teacher does most of the talking or does not wait for silence before continuing the lesson. Writing standards are average; students have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their work is generally very well presented. Writing is also creative and poetic; for example, in one Year 7 class students worked enthusiastically to compile a 'Forest of Stories' with imagination and insight. The work of a minority of students, mainly boys, is less well presented. Recent initiatives to improve boys' standards include a sensitive choice of texts and a consistent approach by teachers to raise expectations. These are beginning to have a positive impact. The standards of all students are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of writing assignments and increasing use of ICT to aid the presentation of work.
131. Attainment in English by the end of Year 11 is above average. The standard of work in English literature is also above average. Students write with understanding and appreciation of Shakespearean texts and pre-20th century poetry. They read a wide variety of texts and successfully make complex inferences. A key feature in the

students' work is their ability to place a text in a historical context and then compare it with modern society. They can evaluate character and theme at a sophisticated level and produce detailed writing assignments. Overall, presentation of work is careful and consistent. Students can analyse media texts and research references. They use standard and non-standard English appropriately and are respectful listeners. A minority of students relies too heavily on the teacher and their work is brief, lacking in detailed understanding and insight.

132. Students with special educational needs make good progress. They receive good support from their class teachers who use educational plans provided by the special educational needs department to plan lessons and devise strategies for success. Students with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and there are examples of very good teaching and learning. In a small minority of lessons, students learn less than in others because the teacher talks too much and successful classroom management strategies are lacking. In these lessons, students make satisfactory rather than good progress. In a small minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons, work for different groups of students is not matched closely enough to their needs, so some can flounder and take up unnecessary amounts of the teacher's time asking questions. In the very good lessons, there is a brisk pace; students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Students respond well to their teachers' care for their achievement and this helps develop the very good relationships evident in the department. In a Year 11 lesson on poetry, the students thoroughly appreciated analysing race and prejudice and deepening their understanding of the poem. They consciously shaped language for a purpose and presented their findings in a deeply felt and expressive manner, because the teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking. In a Year 7 lesson, students worked furiously to draft and polish their creative work and spoke meaningfully about their tasks in pairs. They produced a large amount of work and enjoyed it immensely; the teacher's enthusiasm infected the students, whose sheer joy of the lesson encouraged and developed their love of the subject. In a small minority of lessons students are not sufficiently involved by the teacher, so they lose interest and less work is produced.
134. The teaching of drama as a separate subject in Years 7, 8 and 9 increases students' confidence and understanding in both English and drama. It enriches the curriculum and enhances the good spiritual and moral provision in the English department. Students understand and demonstrate tableaux, mime, body memory and performance because of a well-planned scheme of work. Enthusiastic teaching by non-specialists results in positive enjoyment by the students. Drama teaching requires a different approach to classroom management and this needs developing so that the focus of the students is constant. Related extra-curricular activities, such as the very successful drama productions, celebrate students' achievements and increase their involvement and participation.
135. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear educational vision that inspires both teachers and students. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the students. They observe each other's lessons and this sharing of good practice is improving teaching styles, classroom management and students' learning.

Procedures for assessment are clear and used by the head of department to set individual students' targets. This is not consistent in practice and ongoing assessment is sometimes bland and lacking in specific targets to guide students' improvement. Students' work is cross-checked for progress, standards and capability and this ensures that they are pushed to reach their potential. The relatively new head of department has developed a cohesive team after a period of instability and there is good capacity for further improvement in standards.

136. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Students' achievements have been maintained, and literacy teaching has been used effectively to target further improvements in English language. The main priority in the English departmental action plan is to target students working around grade D to help their improvement to higher grades at the end of Year 11, and to increase the number of A\*-C grades. This exemplifies the department's commitment, which reflects that of the college's, to improve standards. Homework is used effectively to support students' learning by giving challenging opportunities to extend students' skills and thinking. Standards are rising, and, with the shared commitment to sharing good practice and attention to identified areas for improvement, the department has the capacity to succeed even further.

## **Drama**

137. The provision of drama in Years 10 to 11 adds depth and breadth to the curriculum. Results were well above the national average at GCSE this year and based on an entry of 26 per cent which is higher than the national average. Students achieved results that were better than those in most other subjects that they studied. Standards in the work observed during the inspection were well above the levels expected nationally and students continue to achieve much higher standards than could be expected, as their attainment was average on entry to the course. Achievement reflects this and is very good.
138. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes outstanding, resulting in very good learning. Teachers are committed to the subject and contribute to the wider education it gives the students. In particular, the drama teachers successfully put emphasis on encouraging decision-making skills, and providing opportunities for students to think for themselves. At the same time, the teachers' requirements for students to develop their own portfolios of work, to visit theatres and to empathise with each other, help to develop their independence. Students learn very well because lessons are well prepared and maintain a good pace. Consequently, all students gain the maximum insight into the subject as well as gaining knowledge of a wide range of sophisticated drama skills. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. In a Year 11 lesson, dramatic presentations were professional, carefully planned, executed and skilful thanks to the high expectations of the teacher and carefully targeted lesson planning. A powerful feature of the teaching is the regular combination of intellectual and social development so that students frequently discuss and analyse philosophical questions with sensitivity and maturity. The written element of the course requirements is less developed and students' work is relatively sparse in this area. The head of department is addressing this as a priority and indications are that this would further improve very high standards. A wide range of extra-curricular activities contributes to the positive ethos of the college. In the annual production, staff and a large number of students work with many departments, which encourages collaboration in different disciplines and develops the very good

relationships. Unfortunately, the department is unable to stage large musical productions because of a lack of suitable accommodation.

## **KEY SKILLS: LITERACY**

139. Literacy skills across the curriculum are average. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary especially in science, drama and English. The library supports all subjects, for instance by stocking specialised texts and multi-media materials. The English department has dictionaries available in each classroom; key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise students with these words. Carefully censored Internet access allows students to research topics in detail. Students discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly in most subjects and show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. More developed discursive and analytical speaking is not consistent, however, in subjects where literacy teaching is less emphasised. In modern foreign languages, for example, students' speaking skills at GCSE were their weakest area. Reading fluency is encouraged and seen to particular effect in English and history. The textbook used in mathematics has a high reading age, which was observed to undermine the interpretation of some questions among lower attaining students. Writing at length is a feature in English and history. Most subjects undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously. With the support of the English and special educational needs departments, students gradually make improvements to their spelling, reading and writing skills.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good overall.
- Procedures for the assessment of students are good.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good.
- Analysis of student data against national norms is very good.
- There are well-planned schemes of work.
- The inclusion of students with special educational needs, particularly those with a hearing impairment, is good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The quality and range of learning opportunities that will enhance students' personal development.
- The teaching of literacy skills.
- The development of the plenary session and use of more detailed learning objectives.
- The development of marking strategies, which offer students feedback on what they need to do to improve.

140. In 2001, the proportion of students at the age of 14 achieving level 5 or above was above the national average but below average when compared to similar colleges. The proportion of students at the age of 14 achieving level 6 or above matched the national average, but was well below average when compared to similar colleges. The students' test results were very close to teachers' assessments. The average points score is close to the national average for all schools and the average for similar schools, with boys performing better overall than girls. The average points score is better than in English or science. Given that attainment in mathematics by students

at the age of 14 is broadly in line with the national average and is above their prior attainment on entry to the college, the department is adding good value over Years 7 to 9.

141. In 2001, the proportion of students at the age of 16 achieving GCSE grades A\*-C was broadly in line with the national average, with girls performing better than boys, but not significantly so. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A\*-G matched the national average and again girls performed better than boys. The average points score was not as good as in English and science. Over the last three years the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A\*-C has been above the national average. Comparing students' levels of attainment at the age of 16 with national benchmark information, the department is adding good value over Years 10 and 11.
142. The standard of work of students in Year 9 seen during the inspection is average, with some work above average, particularly by the highest attaining students. There are clear examples and complete exercises with all working shown, which enable them to refer to and practise newly taught skills. Examples of extension work for the gifted and talented students were not common. Elements of all the National Curriculum attainment targets are represented. The standard of recorded work by the lowest attaining students is, overall, below average with inaccurate, untidy work and spelling errors often going unchallenged. Many brief exercises involve only answers, with few clear examples that guide students' thinking and presentation. Work by the highest attaining Year 11 students is above average. Students cover a range of topics in line with the GCSE scheme of work. Recorded work is neat, accurate and presented with a concern for layout and appearance. Students' work illustrated good use of previously taught skills such as the rules of number and algebra when solving quadratic equations. Work by average and lower attaining students is average with some good aspects. Work is generally legible and of a higher standard than work completed previously without having to rely on the calculator.
143. Achievement in mathematics is good throughout for all students, including those with special educational needs and hearing impairment. The commitment of specialist mathematics teachers and the overall quality of teaching and learning are improving students' achievement. However, students make only limited use of ICT to support learning, owing to difficulties of access to the college's computer facilities. Schemes of work and lesson plans also do not take account of gifted and talented students and their achievement could improve. High attaining students' numerical skills are good. Year 11 students can apply the rules that distinguish rational from irrational numbers, but they lack an appreciation of the power of estimation and establishing hypotheses for testing purposes. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of the rules of algebra, which they can apply to a variety of topics successfully. Year 9 students were observed simplifying algebraic division and substituting into algebraic fractions. Students develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measurement and progress well in handling data and probability. For example, Year 7 students were observed conducting their own investigation into student height comparing boys and girls using a variety of representative data. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
144. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is undermined by large classes being taught in relatively small rooms. This is not catered for in some teachers' lesson plans. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good. Teachers' planning is effective and objectives, although brief, are almost

always shared with students at the start of lessons to good effect in giving a shared purpose to lessons. Good use is made of learning support assistants. Teachers' expectations are high and good use is made of challenging questions to promote intellectual effort and deepen understanding. Where lessons are very good, teachers use time and ICT resources such as the interactive whiteboard very effectively to promote good learning and behaviour. Good use is made of a variety of 'bite size' activities, such as ICT, game activities and written work in a Year 7 lesson for lower attaining students, thus helping them to maintain their concentration. Where lessons are satisfactory, progress is slower because there is an over-reliance on the textbook or work does not relate sufficiently to the lesson objective.

145. There are a number of improvements that could be made to raise the overall quality of teaching further. Teaching methodologies generally do not provide sufficient opportunities for small group work, investigations and work at the whiteboard to enhance students' personal development. Opportunities for students to confirm their understanding, use the technical vocabulary and explain their thinking through 'open' questioning are overlooked. Displays of students' work in classrooms and adjacent corridors that celebrate success and raise self-esteem are minimal. The teaching of literacy skills is sometimes unsatisfactory. Lesson objectives require expansion and the use of the plenary session often reverts to a review of the work covered during lessons rather than questions that inform the quality of teaching and learning. Homework of an appropriate standard is issued regularly but extension work for the most able is omitted. Marking is inconsistent and there is a lack of relevant diagnostic annotation in exercise books to support learning. Work marked by the students is not monitored and few records are kept. Students are unaware of the level of attainment at which they are working or what to do to improve. Planning to address these weaknesses in students' learning, particularly at Key Stage 4, is at an early stage of development.
146. The standard of literacy in mathematics is below average. Key words are displayed in most classrooms; however, key statements and hypotheses are uncommon in exercise books. There are few writing opportunities using a writing frame outside the planned scheme of work. Investigative teaching approaches in lessons, involving students developing speaking and listening skills through discussion and group work, are also uncommon, though more evident at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. Students are comfortable with the demands of the teacher and respond well to challenging questions, supporting the pace of the lesson, but very few ask questions.
147. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department has worked hard to overcome difficulties caused by the turnover of staff. Subject specialists have a clear commitment to raising standards although the sharing of good practice as part of their professional development needs co-ordinating more closely. Department policies are limited and need updating in the handbook and their implementation monitored and evaluated as part of a calendar of events that inform teaching and learning. Overhead projectors and other resources are used well and the presence of the interactive whiteboard and monitors has a positive effect on learning.
148. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection although issues around students' personal development have not been addressed. Procedures for the collection and analysis of assessment data are very good, but this does not feed through consistently to ensure effective target setting.



## KEY SKILLS: NUMERACY

149. The standard of numeracy is satisfactory. Despite below average levels of prior attainment on entry to the college, students achieve well, matching national expectations by the age of 14. The standard in ICT, design and technology, art and design, science, mathematics and modern foreign languages is good. Selected students are withdrawn from some lessons in Year 7 where there is need to support and improve their numerical competency. Individual Successmaker' targets are established and students' performance is tracked. Summer colleges are a regular event. In ICT, knowledge of percentages and graphs underpins work on databases and spreadsheets. Students can vary the data and recognise the change in outcomes. In mathematics, good use is made of the National Numeracy Strategy across Years 7 to 9. Students are encouraged to take part in 'mathematics challenges' and master classes. In science, students make good use of fractions, decimals and percentages in a variety of contexts. In food technology, accurate measurement is used effectively and there is good numerical evidence in project work of surveys and bar charts to illustrate outcomes of practical work. Years 10 and 11 science students made very good use of the rules of algebra transforming formulae and substituting given values when solving velocity and resistance problems. Many departments include references to numeracy in their schemes of work although no whole-college curriculum audit has been conducted to support teaching and learning. Library books to support coursework or sustain students' skills, knowledge and understanding are limited and used infrequently.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- There is very good management and positive leadership from all those with responsibilities in the department.
- There are clear, effective and detailed work schemes for all years.
- There is a shared commitment to constantly improve standards.
- There is good ICT provision, good accommodation and resources.
- Teaching overall is good.

### Areas for improvement

- More effective use of targets with students, particularly in Years 7 to 10.
- More extension work to challenge even further the most able students.

150. The students enter the college with levels of attainment slightly below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3 the students are achieving the national average and are achieving well above this at the end of Key Stage 4. The average points score in science was just below mathematics, but above English in the 2001 National Curriculum tests. Compared to schools that are deemed to be similar, the GCSE results are significantly higher than the average. This represents very good achievement. The students have a positive attitude to science and work well and with real interest. Boys and girls achieve equally and the department has continued to develop since the last inspection. Students achieve better results in science than in the other core subjects at GCSE.
151. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the students are making very good progress. Standards progressed from average standard in Year 7 to well above

average in Year 11. In Years 10 and 11, for example, students showed that they were capable of thinking through practical problems and presenting their work in a mature fashion, using graphical or mathematical work as appropriate. In one physics lesson, students in a class were able to discuss confidently the variables in a projectile experiment and to make allowances to ensure a 'fair test' to give meaningful results. Students are confident in the use of ICT and excellent use of the department's facilities was seen in a Year 10 lesson for below average students where both teacher and students were using the interactive whiteboard to very good effect. The department reinforced the work in literacy by emphasising key words in all the work seen. These key words were prominent in the laboratories and were frequently issued as handouts. Boys and girls were achieving equally well and there was no difference in approach or performance seen either in the work examined or in the classes observed. The department is still building on its previous good record and has made good progress since the last inspection. Students with special educational needs progress well and the higher achieving students do obtain the highest examination grades. However, there was some evidence in the lessons observed that the most able students could have been given greater challenges either by skilful oral questions or by extension work.

152. The overall quality of the teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared and organised and result in effective learning. Visual aids, including power-point presentations, video and overhead projectors are used well to enhance both teaching and learning. Lessons frequently use a good practical demonstration to begin and the teachers draw knowledge out of the students by intelligent question and answer sessions. Teachers have high expectations of their students and demand much of them in terms of attention to detail and the maintenance of high standards. In a Year 8 lesson an excellent video of electrical circuitry was shown and then the teacher was able to draw out students' previous knowledge and then enrich their learning by relating the circuits under study to many practical examples from life from the teacher's own experience. Throughout the lesson, students concentrated well and made a good contribution.
153. Practical work is well organised and always relevant. Classes are managed well and, as a result, behaviour is generally very good. This leads to good learning and students are able to undertake scientific investigations with both interest and enthusiasm, leading to very good progress being made. Scrutiny of students' work showed that many, particularly the most able, were enthusiastic enough about science to research much more than the minimum required for homework. Short-term target setting is good, using good marking procedures allied to assessment slips in students' exercise books. However, there is some uncertainty in students' minds about their targets for Key Stage 3 and, in Year 10, for GCSE.
154. The department is well resourced. It has good accommodation in large, airy laboratories, which have good displays of students' work and colourful, informative and relevant posters. Generally teachers are based in one laboratory and this both helps and encourages the use of teaching aids. The ICT equipment is very good and was seen being used effectively to enhance learning. Equipment for class experiments was also very good and clearly maintained at a high level. The technicians provided an invaluable and much appreciated service to the teachers and their work is a significant factor in ensuring that the equipment is kept in excellent condition. The space for working in the preparation rooms is a little limited and increased storage may need to be considered in the future.

155. The leadership and management are real strengths of the department. Responsibilities are clearly designated and all those with responsibility lead their areas effectively and enthusiastically. The schemes of work that have been developed by the department are excellent. They provide clear and well thought through guidelines which are a great help to all teachers, allowing each teacher to enrich the teaching and the learning experience of the students. There is also a corporate will apparent in every member of the department to continue to raise standards and improve the already good achievement in science. There is a constant developmental approach, for example the department had adapted CASE (Cognitive Acceleration to enhance Scientific Education) successfully to enhance teaching and learning. Co-operative work with other colleges has resulted in the development of new marking and assessment monitoring procedures in the department. Training is continuing in the further use of ICT and there is some very interesting work being done in an initiative with the feeder primary schools. The department also has good procedures in place for the monitoring and support of its teachers, and scrutiny of books also occurs. Overall the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good overall.
- The overall standard of work seen in Years 7 to 11.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and well informed.
- The contribution that the subject makes to the life of the college.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Assessment criteria need to be explained more clearly to students.
- ICT resources.
- The use of modern technology.
- Provision for vocational subject areas within the curriculum.

156. Students enter the college with very low levels of attainment in art and design at Year 7. However, they make very good progress and by the end of Year 9 attainment is slightly above the national average. In Years 10 and 11, students are making good progress. They apply effort to their work, are productive and work at a good pace. The majority work in an organised and controlled manner. Teaching ranges from good to very good. This is a significant factor in helping to motivate students and to help improve their ability to communicate clearly through art and design activities. There has been steady improvement since the last inspection.
157. In the 2001 GCSE examination, there was some decline in the number of students who gained A\*-C grades in art and design. The results in 2001 were below the national average. However, girls' attainment in the 2001 GCSE examination showed a significant improvement over their performance in the 2000 examination, whereas there was a significant decline in boys' achievement over the same period. The percentage of girls who achieved grades A\*-C in the 2001 examination was much higher than that of boys.

158. Work seen during the inspection, however, demonstrates that standards overall are improving and are presently above the national average for students in both Year 9 and Year 11. Teachers' assessments of students at the end of Year 9 are significantly above the national average for students aged 14. Most students in Year 7 are interested in the tasks that are set by their teachers. They use line, tone, shape and colour to produce interesting two-dimensional studies. It is clear that the majority of these students enjoy their art and design lessons. By the time that students reach Year 8, most are capable of working at a reasonable pace and apply themselves readily to their work. The two-dimensional objects that are produced are more personal and the students can now sustain work over much longer periods of time. A significant minority, however, continue to have difficulty in using various media and materials. In Year 9, many students have developed a deeper interest in art and design as a means of communicating their ideas and expressing their feelings. As they gain in confidence the quality of their ideas and concepts improves significantly. Most now demonstrate much greater control over a broad range of media and materials. In particular, one group of Year 9 students was engaged in the production of their own studies based upon the work of the Italian artist, Carlo Crivelli. They showed that they now possessed the capacity for carrying out detailed analysis of this artist's work through line, tone, shape and colour. There were very good working relationships between teacher and students. These students make very good progress throughout Years 7 to 9.
159. In the work seen in the inspection, students demonstrate that they make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve well. The majority of them are interested in the tasks that are set. They demonstrate that they have the capacity to work with a much higher degree of independence and are learning to think for themselves. Although there is currently over-emphasis on a highly traditional approach to the art and design curriculum, some students are beginning to experiment with modern technology, photography and computer-generated images as a means of communicating ideas. The higher attaining students have interesting and highly personal visual diaries, which are the results of research work that has been carried out at home. There remains a need, however, for some highly structured exercises that will enable students to develop their basic drawing and painting skills. By Year 11, the quality of students' ideas has improved and students are beginning to produce more complex studies in two and three dimensions. The majority demonstrate clearly that they now possess the capacity for greater independence of thought. They are capable of carrying out research into a given theme from which they will produce a finished piece. Girls work with much greater concentration and focus than boys, and this is confirmed by their higher GCSE examination results.
160. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good throughout Years 7 to 11 and is good overall. Generally speaking, teachers prepare well before lessons and there is evidence of good planning. They are well informed and possess adequate subject knowledge which ensures that they can address areas of student concern as they arise. On the whole, the teachers' line of questioning is very good and they succeed in drawing interesting responses from students. As a consequence of this, most students are very clear about what they must do, and what they are expected to achieve during lessons. For the most part, subject matter is carefully selected in terms of its suitability for students at all ages. Teachers have been successful in creating a challenging yet sympathetic environment for students, one in which relationships are very good.
161. Although there are some examples of students using photography and computers to generate images, at present teachers place too much emphasis on a fine art, craft-

based approach to the curriculum, which tends to exclude design activities that are dependent on modern technology. Assessment procedures are in place and the recording documentation is satisfactory. Assessment is seen as an ongoing process and teachers do make a sustained effort to provide critical comment on students' work during lessons. Generally the teaching methods employed are appropriate to the needs of students and teachers always demand high standards of behaviour. For the most part students responded positively to the demands of the teachers and behaviour generally was good. The department is highly successful in including special educational needs students into art and design lessons. There is the recognition that these students, too, deserve the right to communicate their ideas and to express their feeling through art and design activities.

162. Teachers are supportive of all students, including students with special educational needs, and all are given ample opportunity to develop greater self-awareness through art and design activities. Students are encouraged to develop deeper understanding of their own cultural traditions and those of other cultures such as Native North Americans. There are good displays of work in the art rooms and throughout the college which stimulate interest in the subject area. Although the current curriculum on offer has many positive features it does not provide sufficient opportunity for those students who have an interest in a more work-related, vocational curriculum. At present the ICT resources within the department are inadequate and restrict what can be achieved using computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers. There is a need for creating much greater access to modern technology that includes photography and ICT.
163. The department is well led and management is good. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. All members of the department are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. The available rooms, resources and equipment are used effectively to stimulate learning. However, assessment procedures need to be more clearly articulated for the benefit of both staff and students. Departmental documentation is accepted as the responsibility of the whole team with overall responsibility falling on the head of department. The effectiveness of this documentation is evaluated yearly by the head of department and noted in the departmental development plan. The process is effective in including all staff.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good overall; teachers have high expectations and their planning is thorough.
- Students are making good progress, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The curriculum offers a good range of material experiences, and computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are used extensively from Year 7 onwards.
- Resources are good and used effectively.

### Areas for improvement

- Two main workshop areas are too small for whole classes engaged in practical work.
- Teaching provision in Years 7 to 9, where classes are taught by more than one teacher.

164. Students enter the college with standards below average and levels of attainment are average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students make good progress and achieve

well in relation to their prior attainment. The quality of teaching in design and technology is generally good and results in good learning. The majority of students are attentive, keen and interested in the subject. The good teaching and the interest shown by the students are the main reasons for the good progress that is being made, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

165. The GCSE food technology results in 2001 were above the national average, graphic products were in line with the national average, and systems and control and resistant materials were below. The combined results for design and technology subjects were slightly below the national average and the college's average A\*-C grades. Overall results in the last three years have shown a very slight decline. This has been partly due to staffing difficulties. In all the lessons inspected in Years 10 and 11, teachers focused clearly on improving examination performance within their lessons. Girls do better than boys at this stage. Students with hearing impairment are making good progress, particularly in the planning of their ideas for practical work. Their success is attributed to the good support from teachers and the very good specialist assistance. A student with English as an additional language is mastering the technical language within systems control and is making very good progress. Students with special educational needs make good progress, especially when given extra support by their teachers.
166. When students first enter the college, their attainment is below the national average. Students make good progress during their first three years because careful and detailed planning ensures good progression of skills, knowledge and understanding through interesting and exciting activities. During the inspection pupils observed in lessons in Years 7 to 9 had just begun a new design and technology module and were learning new skills satisfactorily. However, from the scrutiny of work and work on display it is evident that the pupils' designing and making skills show good progress by the age of 13. The development of good literacy and numeracy skills is given a high priority with key technical vocabulary being emphasised along with the need to estimate and measure accurately for practical activities. ICT skills are incorporated into the schemes of work and are used regularly when and where appropriate. In Year 7, students use the correct terminology to record causes and reasons for accidents that might happen in the food preparation areas. Year 9 students are designing an electronic sensor device and can produce workable designs. They also have a good understanding of the uses and properties of acrylic materials. However, some lower attaining students in another Year 9 group have difficulty shaping accurately blocks of wood to be used as a mould for the electronic sensor cover. In Year 9, food technology students are investigating bread and bread products and, although the bread rolls they make are successful, the students are lacking in confidence because of their recent limited experiences in handling foods.
167. Students following GCSE courses in graphics and food are obtaining higher grades because their designing skills are well developed. The engineering group are making good progress in learning about the properties of materials and how to use large-scale machinery to make scribes and brackets for hanging baskets. During the inspection, two food technology teachers were on long-term sickness leave, but the students were being set appropriate written work by the absent teachers who regularly mark and correct their work. Both in the catering and food technology groups, students are developing good research and planning skills. The catering students are planning to cater for a children's party or a New Year's Eve dinner to be served on Eurostar in 2002. The high attainers in the food technology group are successfully collating research information and planning the development of a new cooked, chilled product.

168. The Year 11 graphics work observed showed a range of good designing skills and ideas for shop fronts and cafés. For example, students are learning how to make scale models of their designs. Higher attainers are producing very detailed annotated designs and lower abilities are able to sketch and articulate their ideas in depth. A group taking resistant materials for GCSE in Year 11 is designing a range of storage units. The more able in the group are using a wide range of ideas and are doing some in-depth research into appropriate materials. The lower ability students in this group have difficulty selecting appropriate materials and estimating the quantity required.
169. Teaching is good at both key stages. Teachers plan lessons in depth to maximise the curriculum time they have available. Skills, knowledge and understanding show progression over each key stage and regular references are made in lessons to prior learning and projects that have been made. Students are encouraged to use a wide range of resources, for example, in Year 7 students use CAD and CAM very effectively to make their puzzles. Students respond positively to the challenges and tasks they are set to do. Some students lack confidence, particularly girls when shaping wood in Year 9, and also boys and girls when making bread in Year 9. But, with very good teacher guidance and peer support, they overcome their apprehension very quickly. Teachers' expectations are high and most abilities accept and relish the challenges and only occasionally are students reluctant to make the required effort. Since the previous inspection, schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been re-done and as a result designing skills have improved. Teachers are now focusing on specific skills in each project and the new system of assessment is monitoring and recording students' progress and achievements in detail. Targets are set and regularly reviewed and, through discussion or written comments, students can identify areas for improvement. Students are now beginning to achieve the higher attainment levels in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9.
170. There has been little change in the GCSE examination results since the last inspection. However, teachers are planning more tightly structured lessons, giving dated action plans and providing the opportunity for extra practical sessions after college. Project work is being checked regularly for progress and content, and good support material is provided for students' own self-assessment of the progress they are making. Revision lessons for examination preparation are highly structured with tight time scales for completion of practice questions. Teaching staff in the department have regularly attended subject-specific training courses to up-date their knowledge and changes in examination courses and in preparation for the new option courses now offered. Although in most lessons students respond positively to learning, occasionally the higher achievers are not sufficiently challenged particularly when there is a lack of differentiated work planned for the lesson. Homework is set on a fairly regular basis.
171. Students' behaviour is generally very good because they have very good working relationships with the teachers. A few Year 7 boys did get over-excited when being introduced to a new subject and a new working environment. However, attitudes are generally positive and students come to lessons prepared to concentrate and work hard.
172. The department is well led and managed. A very good team spirit exists and views and ideas are shared regularly between staff. The problems caused by the two absentee staff have been addressed and monitored effectively and the supply teachers and the graduate trainee teacher are working conscientiously to cover the

curriculum in their absence. The planning of the Key Stage 3 curriculum is detailed and covers the National Curriculum requirements but the new timetable is affecting continuity and progress over the key stage. Most of the identified weaknesses from the previous report have been addressed but GCSE examination results in design and technology have remained in line with the national average. The close monitoring and targeting of pupils' progress, together with the tightly structured lessons, should help to improve the overall standards and ultimately the grades at GCSE. Predicted grades for Year 11 groups indicate that a higher number than previously will gain A\*-C grades. Over the years, graphics and food technology have remained above the national average. The extra-curricular activities and the successes gained in competitions all help to make design and technology a vibrant subject.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Students' very good attitudes enable good progress to be made.
- Excellent marking shows students how to improve.
- Excellent homework extends and reinforces student learning.

### Area for improvement

- The use of ICT to support learning is not fully developed.

173. Students' attainment is average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievement in relation to their previous learning is good. The quality of teaching in geography is very good in most lessons. This is a major factor in enabling the quality of learning to reach a high standard.
174. GCSE results at A\*-C in 2001 were average when compared with national figures. The proportion of students reaching these higher grades has declined slightly over the last three years. However, the proportion of students attaining A\*-G grades was above the national average. There was no significant difference in the results achieved by boys and girls.
175. The overall standard of work of students in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection is above average. When teachers assessed work at the end of Year 9 in 2001, results were above average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. Students enter the college with below average standards of attainment. By the end of Year 9 their level of achievement is good and their standards are above average. Students with special educational needs reach standards that are below national expectations. However these students make good progress because work is generally matched to their needs. Higher attaining students show good understanding of geographical skills and concepts and make good progress and achieve well.
176. Students in Years 7 to 9 generally develop a good understanding of geographical skills, ideas and the location of places. Most students in Year 9 can accurately describe the factors that influence where settlements develop but only the higher attaining students could begin to explain these factors. Most students in Year 7 have a sound understanding of the basics of Ordnance Survey map reading. Lower attaining students are less secure in their understanding of how to calculate distance from a map. Those of higher attainment can give accurate grid references and can



interpret landscape features from contour patterns. Their fieldwork skills develop well between Years 7 and 9 due to the emphasis put upon this by their teachers. Higher attaining students show good geographical reasoning and analytical skills in, for example, linking characteristics of slope and land use. Limited evidence of such work was an issue in the last report, which has been successfully tackled. Written work is satisfactory overall. Higher attaining students in Year 9 write detailed and accurate accounts to explain the reasons for the destruction of the tropical rainforests. However, lower attaining students' work show below average literary skills with spelling being particularly poor. Most students' understanding of how to use and interpret graphs develops well as they move through from Year 7 to Year 9. Students' ICT skills are satisfactory.

177. The overall standard of work of students in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection is above average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Overall students' achievement is also good. Students with special educational needs make good progress, as do the higher attainers.
178. Most students in Year 10 have a good knowledge of the features of a drainage basin. Higher attaining students can clearly explain how rainwater reaches the groundwater store. Lower attaining students, however, cannot always accurately locate drainage features such as 'watershed'. Most students in Year 11 can present points for and against developments in a National Park. Higher attaining students, however, write extensively on this topic to give a coherent picture of the issues. Most students' fieldwork files are carefully produced and show good progression from work done earlier in the college. Some use ICT well to present and enhance their work. Higher attaining students show good analysis of data and can draw valid conclusions. Most students in Year 11 can interpret divided bar graphs. Lower attaining students do not fully understand why employment structure varies between countries of differing stages of economic development.
179. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers are well prepared so that lessons start and proceed smoothly. The lessons are always very well planned to meet the needs of all students. The provision of differentiated materials for those with special educational needs and, in some lessons, extension work for the higher attaining students, enables all students to make good progress. The active support given by the teachers and support staff to individuals in lessons further assists the learning of low attaining students. Lesson objectives are explained clearly at the beginning so that students know exactly what they are to learn. In the best lessons teachers return to these at the end of the lesson and, by skilled questioning, reinforce the main learning points. This also enables the teacher to judge the success of the lesson.
180. The quality of teachers' marking is excellent. It is detailed with points for students to improve upon. It shows an outstanding appreciation of the needs of each individual and is a major reason for the very good learning that takes place. The use of homework is also a considerable strength. It is set as an integral part of the lesson. It is challenging and enhances understanding. Students are often required to research topics and are encouraged to use the Internet. Homework also stimulates students' creativity. For example, a Year 9 class had to write a Haiku poem based upon work done on Japanese culture.
181. Lessons are frequently broken down into short, varied activities, interspersed with lively discussion. This enables teachers to check students' progress. Lessons move on at a good pace so that students are actively involved in their learning. A Year 9 lesson on Japan included a student 'brainstorm' session, a short video on Japan, a

Japanese poem and music, the tasting of Japanese food and a demonstration of a Kimono. All of the above considerably enhanced the student appreciation of how Japanese culture is different from that of our own. Teachers know their subject very well. This makes their explanations clear and includes pertinent examples that provide colour to the discussion. In this way the interest of the students is maintained.

182. Students are encouraged to use ICT when appropriate but the provision for using ICT for teaching and learning is not fully developed. This was an issue in the last report. It is difficult to gain access to the ICT rooms with geography classes. However, the Year 8 'laptop' group use ICT very well to research and present geographical information and ideas.
183. Students' attitudes towards geography are mostly very good and a major reason for the very good learning that takes place. Behaviour is usually good because of the challenging yet supportive teaching. Teachers expect students to work hard. They maintain a good working atmosphere with a friendly but firm discipline. Students work well together. Discussion is usually orderly and individuals' views are respected. In a small minority of lessons the standard of learning declined in the latter stages because students were not carefully managed.
184. The department is led and managed very well. There is a clear sense of direction that is shared by all teachers. There is a very good emphasis on standards of attainment and how these can be improved. Assessment information is used effectively to set targets, to monitor progress and to give students ideas on how to improve. The subject benefits from having specialists teaching throughout Years 7 to 11. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the department has the capacity to raise standards further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers plan lessons very well, manage students very well and expect them to work to the best of their ability and to behave well.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- A reduction is needed in the proportion of classes in Years 7 to 9 which are taught by more than one teacher.
- Procedures for assessing students in Years 7 to 9.
- The monitoring of teaching in the department.
- Greater use of ICT in lessons.

185. Levels of attainment are broadly average at the end of Years 9 and 11. These are similar standards to those reported at the time of the last inspection. The quality of teaching in history is good, and together with students' positive response to the subject, enables students to make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 11.
186. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment overall is broadly in line with that expected nationally. A smaller proportion than seen nationally, however, achieves the highest standards, and a small proportion in Year 9 are still working at a lower than average

standard. In GCSE examinations, overall results at grades A\*-C were well below average in 2001, although the girls' results were in line with the girls' national average. A lower than average proportion of students achieved A or A\* grades. In 2000 results were below average. The proportion of students who achieve A-G grades has, however, been broadly in line with the national average for the past three years. The decline in attainment in 2001 was attributable to some lengthy teacher absences and to teachers leaving, leading to many students having a number of teachers during their course.

187. Work seen during the inspection from students in Years 7 to 9 shows that standards overall are broadly in line with the national average, although a significant minority continue to work at below average standards. In 2001, teachers assessed their students at the end of Year 9 overall as largely working within the standards expected nationally. Most students begin Year 7 with attainment below the national average and the progress of most from Year 7 to Year 9 is satisfactory. The progress that students make in individual lessons is sometimes good, but for many students who are average and low attaining their achievement over the three years is satisfactory. The sharing of classes by two, or in one case, three teachers makes continuity of work and the retention of knowledge and understanding gained difficult, when in some cases teachers see the class only once every two weeks. Several of the teachers who share the groups are not subject specialists, and although their teaching is satisfactory, this compounds an unsatisfactory situation still further. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as a result of effective support. Appropriately demanding work set by teachers means that the highest attaining pupils usually make good progress in enquiry skills, an improvement since the last inspection.
188. Students in Years 7 to 9 generally have sound, and in some cases, good knowledge and understanding about the past. They explain the causes of events and motives for actions satisfactorily. In a sample of work seen from students in Year 7, for example, they explained successfully the reasons why the Romans invaded Britain. Some extended writing on the fairness of Elizabethan religious settlement from high attaining students in Year 8 included cogent responses based on careful evaluation of the evidence. The higher attaining students clearly understand that people in the past had values and beliefs different from those of today. They explain well differences between attitudes in the past, as for example, in work by students in Year 9 on the Treaty of Versailles, in which they identified, and explained in some detail, the different attitudes towards Germany amongst the Allies. Lower attaining students describe the past reasonably successfully, and see similarities and differences between past and present. Their generally low literacy levels, however, often restrict their ability to record their knowledge and understanding adequately in writing. Most students use sources satisfactorily to extract information about the past. Although the lowest attainers struggle to see more than simple information in sources, the higher attainers make valid deductions about what the information implies.
189. The overall standard of the work of students currently following the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is in line with that expected nationally. A significant proportion is working at standards which are below average. Although only a relatively small proportion reaches the very highest standards, higher attaining students usually make good progress. Students with special educational needs reach below average standards, but make satisfactory progress in a subject requiring quite high literary standards. Most students taking GCSE have at least sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. Students in Year 10, for example, understood and explained clearly many of the reasons for low standards of public

health in 19th century towns. The highest attainers confidently used a range of sources, including a short video, to make deductions about a number of the causes of poor conditions. High attaining students in Year 11 made effective use of several sources to identify and explain the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. They understood the need to take into consideration the possible bias in historical sources. Lower attaining students saw obvious propaganda messages in aspects of a German college timetable from the 1930s, but found it difficult to identify and explain propaganda in two children's stories from the time. The written work from highest attainers was of a good standard, but that from lower attainers, whilst adequate in terms of content, was often brief and poorly expressed, and contained many spelling errors.

190. The teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory and this leads to good learning in the majority of lessons. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and communicate well, so that most students acquire at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding about the past. The work for the lower attainers and students with special educational needs is appropriately matched to their abilities. The work for the higher attainers is sufficiently challenging to enable them to try to reach the highest standards. Lessons are well planned and an appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs, and whole-class teaching, ensures that students have good opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. Lessons are sometimes broken into a series of short activities of different types, interspersed with short feedback sessions, in which teachers check students are making progress. This was particularly successful in a lesson with students in Year 11 about propaganda in Nazi Germany, and it led to most students making good progress in understanding how the Nazi education system indoctrinated children.
191. Teachers expect their students to work hard. They manage their students very well, maintaining a good working environment with friendly, but when necessary, firm, discipline. Most students have a very positive approach to their work, and behave well, and these are important contributory factors to their satisfactory progress. A lesson in which students in Year 7 had to move around the classroom to 'barter' goods, as if in a medieval village, might well have become chaotic but for the very effective management by the teacher and the mature approach to the activity by the students. A small minority have a less than positive attitude, and as a result make less progress. This was especially noticeable among a small number of boys in Year 11. Most students listen very well to teachers' instructions and explanations and so are clear about what they are asked to do. When working individually most concentrate on the task in hand, and when working in groups or pairs they do so co-operatively. Many show interest and want to improve their knowledge and understanding. There is clear mutual respect between teachers and their students.
192. The leadership and management of the department are now good. Recent changes in staffing have resulted in the leadership being in the hands of two acting heads of department who have identified and begun to implement an appropriate list of priorities for the department to continue the satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Schemes of work are being re-written to take account of recent changes in the curriculum. Assessment for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is being reviewed, and new assessment tasks are being introduced. These indicate procedures that will ensure an improvement in the quality and reliability of the teacher assessments in Years 7 to 9, especially for the non-specialist teachers. There is insufficient formal monitoring of the teaching in the department. There is a good ethos for learning throughout the department and a strong commitment to improving the performance of pupils taking examination courses. Overall the provision of resources is good. Although one group

in Year 8 uses laptops for their history lessons, relatively little use is made of ICT in other lessons. There is no ICT hardware in the history rooms, which are mobile classrooms where damp has posed problems with ICT equipment, and access to central ICT facilities is not always possible at times to suit the needs of the department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- The new Year 7 course results in students making very good progress in a short time.
- Teaching is good, particularly in helping students to assess their own work against external criteria.
- There are very good arrangements to ensure that computers are used imaginatively across the whole curriculum.
- Students have very good attitudes towards the subject and work hard.
- The subject benefits from a very good provision of hardware and software, and a very good degree of computer literacy across the staff as a whole.

### Area for improvement

- Monitor teaching more effectively to promote the best practice.

193. Standards at entry are broadly average, although the range of prior attainments is a wide one. Good teaching means that the students progress well; achievement is good, leading to above average standards by the ends of Years 9 and 11.
194. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 are above average, with girls performing better than boys at the expected level 5, but with similar results at the higher level 6. The pattern in earlier years was similar. At the end of Year 11, results for the GCSE course, now discontinued, have been above average in recent years. Girls perform better than boys, but boys and girls alike tend to do slightly better in the subject than in the others that they take. Achievement is good; students, including the small numbers with English as an additional language and from minority groups, tend to get better grades than would be expected from their earlier attainments. Results in the first awards in the GNVQ part one course in 2001 show above average standards in terms of the proportion of students gaining a pass, but a below average proportion reached higher award levels. However, these results represented good achievement for the students concerned.
195. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average for the end of Year 9, representing good achievement overall; lower attainers make very good progress. At entry, some students in Year 7 are unfamiliar with the basic features of the screen interface, or have poor keyboard and mouse skills. In contrast, others, including those who have benefited from the college's work with laptops in primary schools, are already working at levels more typical of Year 9 students. By the end of Year 9, few students fail to meet at least the expected standard and many exceed it. Students demonstrate appropriate competence across the programme of study, including data handling, and control and sensing work, because of their effective use of computers across the whole curriculum. Students are confident users of e-mail and the Internet, make effective use of a wide range of features of word-processing software, and have a good understanding of spreadsheet work. In Year 7, the recently revised course has resulted in students of all attainment levels and backgrounds making rapid progress in both basic skills and in the creative use of music technology, for example creating short audio-visual presentations to tell a story. In addition to acquiring skills in using new software, students increase their ability to apply them to a wide range of situations. By Year 9, most students have learned that their work in the subject must be fit for purpose. Thus when presenting information, or designing spreadsheets,

they appreciate the importance of keeping the user in mind. Boys and girls progress at similar rates. Students with special educational needs make good progress, particularly so when they are supported by learning assistants.

196. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average for students following the Part One GNVQ course. This is higher than the 2001 results would suggest because of the teachers' growing familiarity with course requirements, and also the greater focus on individual learning and responsibility. These are now resulting in good achievement by boys and girls; interim results for students on the present courses suggest a significantly improved proportion of merit awards. Students build well on the foundations laid in Years 7 to 9, for example becoming more skilled at locating information, designing documents for specific purposes, interrogating databases, or when creating more complex spreadsheets. Higher attainers have a good range of subject knowledge, and back this with the ability to evaluate their work carefully. Middle and lower attainers tend to produce portfolio work that, whilst substantial, tends to describe what is done rather than assessing its effectiveness. As in Years 7 to 9, students with special educational needs achieve well, helped by the modular nature of the course and the individual nature of much of the teaching. In all years, students demonstrate a good use of technical vocabulary, and their broader literacy skills are helped by the evaluative nature of many of the tasks that they carry out. For example, by Year 9, students comment on the readability of documents. Their numeracy skills are also developed by work in data handling. All but the lowest attainers are able to assign formulae in spreadsheets with confidence, or to produce accurate, and relevant, charts and graphs, whilst older students are able to handle logical relationships.
197. The quality of teaching is good overall; none is less than satisfactory and a significant amount is very good. Learning is also good. All teachers have appropriately high expectations and a good knowledge of their subject, although they all work in other departments as well as teaching ICT. This is seen in the quality of basic instruction, the ease with which teachers use hardware and software, and the way in which they carry out question and answer work. More importantly, most teachers also have a very clear understanding of how the subject is assessed, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This results in students having a good knowledge of their own learning, as well as knowing what must be done to improve. Teachers show a good competence in teaching basic skills, both through structured assignments and as opportunities arise, for example when evaluating web pages, or in designing spreadsheets. Lesson planning is good, and the key learning objectives are almost always shared with students. As a result, the students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. However, the methods used by teachers can vary significantly, even with the same basic material. For example, in Year 9, the highest pace of individual learning, and the greatest progress, was seen in a lesson where students were given a clear framework to evaluate a variety of publications, backed by a pithy session using the electronic whiteboard. In contrast, the students working on the same topic in another session progressed less well because they lacked a clear framework and vocabulary for analysis. In a small number of lessons, the teacher tolerates too high a level of background chatter, and students tend to lose concentration; however, most teachers have established very clear codes of behaviour, and make them work. Teachers generally meet the needs of all students well, including those with special educational needs. Sometimes, the limitations of tasks can restrict higher attainers somewhat. On the limited occasions where they are available, learning support staff are used well, whilst the support from the music technician in Years 7 and 8 is excellent.

198. Overall, students have very good attitudes to the subject, behave very well, and enjoy good relationships with each other and with staff. This results in a learning atmosphere in most classrooms that is quiet and purposeful. Where students are asked to make an oral contribution to the work of the class, the others listen attentively and show respect for the speaker's feelings.
199. There has been very good progress since the last inspection. The curriculum arrangements now meet statutory requirements, and standards have improved. The subject is well led, and enjoys the strong backing of senior managers. There is a clear vision for how the subject can enhance learning across the college as a whole. There has been substantial progress towards the wider use of ICT as a natural learning tool across the college. The monitoring of the work of teachers in the classroom, whilst satisfactory, could be extended, so that all students benefit from the many aspects of good practice that exist in the department. Extra-curricular provision is very good, and students of all ages provide highly effective support for their peers as student access managers. Students across the site have good access to a well above average number of modern computers, and the very latest software, for both specialist work and to support their wider learning. However, the room used for the new Year 7 course lacks the high quality display facilities that are found elsewhere.

#### **KEY SKILLS: ICT**

200. As a result of the college's considerable investment in staff training and in learning resources, other subjects of the curriculum make a very good contribution to the students' development in ICT in Years 7 to 11, and to the standards reached. As a result, students are natural users of computers to communicate information, handle data, and use on-line materials in all of their other subjects. Work in mathematics, science and design and technology also contributes well to the students' use and understanding of how computers may be used in modelling, sensing and control. In all years, subject teams are aware of which strands of the subject will be delivered within their own schemes of work. This is monitored carefully by the co-ordinator for ICT. Moreover, the teachers concerned play a key part in assessing the students' standards in the subject at the end of Year 9, moderated by the co-ordinator. This widespread awareness of the subject is helping the college to evolve into an 'e-learning' community. For example, students in the Year 8 laptop group naturally turn to on-line sources to discover more about Charles I's money problems, whilst students in a range of subjects use interactive whiteboards as a natural learning tool. The power of digital audio and video recording is also being exploited. A Year 10 dance group used digital video to analyse performances, whilst in GCSE music, students used computers to generate multi-tracked works and present traditional notations correctly. At breaks and lunchtimes, the library and computer rooms buzz with purposeful activity as students of all ages write up work or carry out researches.



## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Spanish and French are taught as two equal languages in the college.

The quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Students have good attitudes to the languages.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress.
- Teaching is satisfactory with many good features.
- There is good use of ICT.
- The department is well organised.

### Areas for improvement

- The more consistent use of the foreign language by teachers and students in lessons.
- The use of writing and speaking at length using the foreign language.
- The department needs to analyse data about students' performance in order to give more precise targets for improving the quality of their work and raise standards.
- The reports should be reviewed so that parents have a better understanding of their children's standards.

201. Levels of attainment at Years 9 and 11 are average overall. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are satisfactory. Standards in listening and reading are average and above; in speaking and writing they are average and below. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with good features, which include very good subject knowledge, effective planning and good management of students. Students have positive attitudes and respond well to the opportunities for independent work in pairs and groups.
202. GCSE standards in 2001 at grades A\*-C were below average in French and well below average in Spanish. The national average figure for Spanish is high because students more often than not take the language as a second foreign language and are higher attaining language students. This college's students take Spanish as an equal first foreign language and the cohort represents the full ability range. The students achieved satisfactorily in Spanish when account is taken of their starting points. At grades A\*-G, the standards were slightly above average. Girls' performance at A\*-C was better in French than in Spanish. Girls' attainment in French was broadly in line with the national average but their attainment in Spanish was below the national average. Boys' performance in French at A\*-C was below the national average and in Spanish well below. Over the last three years there has been a downward trend in the Spanish results at A\*-C, but the mock examination results this year are higher and demonstrate an improvement.
203. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in French and Spanish are in line with the national average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in both languages were also at the national average. Generally students achieve satisfactorily. In both languages and through Years 7 to 11, standards in listening and the reading of short extracts are at or above the average. Standards in speaking are generally average and below but do rise to above average when the students have opportunities to speak at length as in a Year 8 class. Here, students gradually extended their sentences by describing the buildings in Plymouth and saying what could be experienced there. Standards of speaking for the lower attaining students in French in Year 9 and 11 are below average, because

they do not have a secure knowledge of basic language and cannot bring to mind previously learned language. In a Year 9 Spanish lesson, some low attaining students were not reaching the level they should because of poor attitudes and inappropriate behaviour. Standards of writing are at the average and below but do rise to above average when there are opportunities for writing at length. Students with special educational needs, travellers and students with English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their previous learning in both languages.

204. The quality of teaching in Spanish and French is satisfactory with some good features. The quality of learning is also satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and expertise in the languages they teach and are good role models for pronunciation and intonation but there needs to be greater use of the foreign language by students and teachers during lessons. Teachers plan lessons well but more detailed planning of speaking and writing at length is needed in the schemes of work as there is inconsistent practice within the department. Teachers have good and varied strategies for matching teaching to students' needs; lower attaining students sit next to higher attaining students; wide ability groups are divided into two and initial teacher training students give additional help, well supervised by the teacher. Teachers also ask appropriate questions targeted to individual students and give personal support for those who need it, with the result that students with special educational needs, travellers and students with English as an additional language learn well and make good progress. Students with special educational needs and a bilingual student learned especially well in a Year 10 lesson where students were able to speak at length in French, describing towns and villages and where they were situated. Travellers are also helped to make good progress by the sensitive help they receive from specialist support staff as well as from the teachers in the college.
205. Written and learning homework is set frequently and checked carefully so that students know how well they have understood their classwork and this is undertaken effectively. High attaining students learn very well. Some good group work was observed in a Year 10 Spanish lesson where high attaining students were working independently on a challenging listening comprehension; they shared ideas successfully and persevered with the task even though they found it difficult. New technology, in the form of the electronic whiteboard, is used well and students enjoy their opportunities to work on it themselves. ICT is well planned into the scheme of work and is assessed by the department. Marking is consistently carried out but comments for improvement need to be more precise and targets for improvement are too vague when students write at length. The comments on the Year 11 reports are not sufficiently specific to languages and do not give parents a good understanding of the quality of performance in French and Spanish.
206. Students' attitudes to both languages are usually good. They show interest in their work and sustain concentration, which leads to satisfactory learning. Students listen well to each other and to the teacher, enabling them to make satisfactory to good progress during the lesson. Behaviour is good and students show respect for each other and the teacher, especially during speaking activities.
207. The department is well organised by the acting head of department and there is good consultation between staff. The departmental development plan has identified clear areas for development such as improving the attainment of boys and the development of teaching styles but the department needs to analyse student performance data far more explicitly in order to devise more precise targets for improvement in standards overall. Teachers work hard and have a great commitment to the students. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching that encourages high standards of musical achievement.
- A wide range of thriving extra musical activities.
- Very positive relationships between students and with their teachers.
- Very good resources that include exciting developments in music technology.

### Areas for improvement

- The time allocated for the teaching of music in Years 7 to 9.
- Management and control of developments in music technology.

208. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This demonstrates that standards are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection except with regard to Year 11. GCSE results were judged at that time to be above the national level. Students' achievements in relation to their prior learning are very good. The quality of teaching is very good. There is an impressive variety of musical resources that include very good facilities for music technology. These are key factors, together with the very positive relationships that exist between students and with their teachers, in enabling the students to do well, especially the significant number involved in extra musical activities.
209. Too few students took GCSE in 2001 to make comparisons with national levels valid and comparisons with previous years must be treated with caution because of the small numbers involved. Although results were below average compared with those in previous years, the proportion of students achieving high grades has been maintained. All students, moreover, gained A\*-G grades as they have done consistently for the past three years. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
210. Work seen during the inspection in both Years 10 and 11 confirms that current standards in GCSE match those of the years prior to 2001 and that the downward trend has been rectified. Increasing numbers of students are involved and standards are now in line with national averages. Students achieve well in relation to their starting points. Performing standards are commensurate with individual skills and feature a broad variety of instruments and styles. A significant number of talented students achieve well in the higher grades of Associated Board and other accredited examinations. Standards in composing are average, partly because most compositions are limited in style to conventional chord-based structures. Students are, however, increasingly making good use of computers to enhance their work, and a few examples were seen of composing with these facilities. Standards in listening and understanding are good. Most students perceptively discuss the music they hear in the appropriate musical terms. This was particularly apparent in a Year 11 lesson about Spanish music, where students drew effectively on their knowledge of music from many different world cultures to discriminate national characteristics.
211. The extent of work and progress by students in Years 7 to 9, and their levels of achievement, are being severely restricted by a reduction in the time allocated for music this year. Even taking into account the exciting new challenges in the music technology course that has been introduced, the time allocated for music is restrictive

and does not allow the full entitlement envisaged in the National Curriculum to be fulfilled. Moreover, the long period of time when students have no music lessons each year adversely affects continuity and inhibits progress. At the time of the inspection the effect of this on the quality of learning and on standards is not yet fully apparent.

212. Work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection shows that current standards are in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum, and that standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The standard of singing in lessons is average. Students in Year 7 sing mainly in tune, with good diction, and sometimes in parts. By the end of Year 9, all students improvise on keyboards and perform short pieces. Most can combine melodies and chord sequences expressively in ensembles. The more musically able students improvise their own parts with confidence to enhance these basic textures. This was heard in Year 9 classes where students were filling in gaps between phrases by improvising in blues style. Those with special needs do well because the extensive range of musical resources allows them to fully participate, and individually adapted parts are available to match their needs. All students have a good command of the basic elements of music and use the correct technical terms to describe what they hear. Their knowledge is currently being significantly broadened through the new music technology course. They eagerly absorb new ways of organising and composing music both as an alternative to traditional methods and to enhance their conventional musical skills. Students in Year 7 were making rapid progress using a computer program to compose with pre-set sound patterns, and students in Year 9 used MIDI keyboards enthusiastically to save and store their improvisations.
213. At the time of the inspection about 150 students took part each week in extra music making activities. A wide range of instruments is taught to about 100 students. A full programme of concerts and other opportunities to perform in public is organised each year. Standards are high. The playing of the concert band, jazz group and advanced recorder group, heard during the inspection, was impressive. Live music making is a regular feature in the college and in the wider community. The concert band goes on a tour abroad each year.
214. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Music is taught by experienced and enthusiastic musicians who collectively share a wide range of specialist skills and have a good understanding of what appeals to students of this age. Lessons are meticulously planned to combine practical skills with musical understanding. Teachers are particularly effective in inter-relating performing, composing and listening activities. Students quickly come to enjoy music as a living and communicating language and learn to converse in musical terms. This was apparent in GCSE lessons where students justified their musical judgements in suitably technical terms. Students in all lessons have clear ideas of what is expected of them musically. Objectives are written and explained for them in each lesson, and music is frequently rehearsed rigorously by the whole class before practising individually. The way in which these rehearsals are carried out is impressive in its orderliness. Discipline routines are very well established, firmly and friendly, making a positive impact on students' social development. Their attitudes to each other and their relationships with their teachers are excellent. Behaviour is excellent. Teachers make good use of the extensive resources available and are confident in their use of ICT. For example, the use of sequenced backing tracks in several lessons was effective in freeing teachers to support individual students where necessary. Different levels of tasks are provided to include levels of musical skill. The contribution made by specialist teachers for music technology is highly valued.

215. The department is capably managed and well led. Overall, there has been a satisfactory level of improvement in the department's work since the last inspection. The accommodation is barely satisfactory for the large amount of music making. The main teaching room, although attractively decorated and well equipped, is too small for large scale or extended musical activities. Soundproofing around the department is poor so that full and efficient use of the impressive resources cannot be made. Ongoing development of the college's exciting new music technology courses is of paramount concern for the future of music in the college. Ways have to be found to keep the best of what already exists and integrate it with the challenging demands of new technology.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the provision of provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Well above average results in GCSE physical education and in dance.
- Enhanced learning opportunities through links with the wider community.
- The very good quality of teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' knowledge of their achievements and next stage targets.
- More formal and systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

216. For the last three years GCSE standards, including the percentage achieving the higher A and B grades, in physical education and dance have been well above the national average. This represents very good progress when compared to the below average results in the previous inspection. Present GCSE students are making very good progress and achieving well. Standards of teaching are very good resulting in good progress by all ability levels at all ages.
217. The percentage of students reaching A\*-C in the 2001 GCSE physical education examinations is well above the national average. The percentage achieving the higher A\*-B grades is also above the national average. These high results have been maintained over three years representing very good progress since the last inspection. There were no students sitting the 2001 dance examination but results in 1999 and 2000 were well above the national average. Present GCSE students are maintaining these high standards. Responding to challenging tasks they develop high levels of control in a range of sports. Applying tactics to their play, Year 10 students combine table tennis shot combinations in appropriate game contexts. Year 11 students make further excellent progress in table tennis by using advanced shots and tactics when refining and evaluating their GCSE practices. Both groups further benefit from homework that challenges students to research the impact of changing tactics on games' techniques. Students in a Year 10 GCSE dance class have very good movement skills and make excellent progress in designing and performing motifs in the style of Christopher Bruce.
218. Work seen in non-examination physical education during the inspection show that standards overall are above levels expected nationally. High standards by the age of 14 represent good progress when compared with attainment on entry. Continuity in achievement is maintained across all discrete areas of study. By the end of Year 9 many students have acquired good knowledge and understanding to apply individual

and team strategies and tactics to their work and subsequently achieve higher National Curriculum levels. Boys at this age successfully transfer skills learnt in practice to game situations. They also take on tactical roles in these games and alter techniques accordingly. Year 9 girls quickly learn sophisticated dance routines and adapt these to changing roles and technical requirements. Grouping arrangements enhance progress at this age. Teachers are well aware of the needs of lower ability groups. Their encouragement and challenge significantly motivate these students to achieve. There are high expectations for students to describe appropriate techniques and in doing so they consistently use a wide range of specialist vocabulary.

219. Students maintain these good levels of learning between the ages of 14 and 16. Well-developed departmental planning is connecting the higher National Curriculum levels requirements with relevant programme of study tasks. Students continue to improve their understanding of tactics and decision making and extend and improve their performances. This is aided by the very good continuity and progression in curriculum provision from the previous stages in their learning. The most talented of performers make very good gains in experience and performances. They flourish in extra-curricular and community clubs accessed through the college and many achieve county and national representative honours. Self-evaluation of performance at this stage is under-developed. Although often planned for, there is an inconsistency of expectation for students to evaluate their own and others' performances and make oral contributions related to their findings. This means there are missed opportunities for teachers to assess understanding, thus restricting preparation for next stage practices.
220. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Two lessons observed were excellent. All teachers have very good specialist knowledge and they inform their students of the appropriate skills and techniques in a range of activities. This is a major reason for the notable standards achieved in areas such as boys' and girls' football, table tennis, volleyball and dance. A variety of teaching methods is used to enable students to develop their planning skills and to collaboratively perform and sometimes evaluate performances. In Year 10 table tennis, students feed balls to their partners whilst using specific criteria to judge the effectiveness of a looped topspin return. Students learn from each other and this is effectively encouraged by specific targeted teaching. For example, such learning is encouraged in orienteering lessons when team leaders share instructions and tactics in their collaborative group planning.
221. The relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students relate well to the enthusiasm of their teachers and are motivated to succeed. They show this especially by the very high participation levels, immaculate appearances, and their behaviour and response to teacher interventions in lessons. Planning procedures are very good resulting in challenges that are relevant to all abilities. Department plans show a variety of interesting tasks that pinpoint the principal progressions in learning for all ability groups. The promotion of specialist vocabulary by teachers makes a good impact on students' understanding of key concepts. Numeracy is developed well in recording running times and in orienteering and athletics. Video recording is used effectively to give teachers and students feedback on performance.
222. The head of department offers very good leadership that has enabled the department to embrace change positively and to make very good progress since the last inspection. Priority has been given to a staff development programme that has resulted in increased knowledge and understanding that are directly related to the raising of standards. The present development plans for the department show clear educational direction for the subject. However, it is not clear how action planning is to

be continually monitored and reviewed before next stage implementation. Some evaluation of teaching occurs as part of targeted professional development and informal head of department monitoring. Further developments of this strategy are needed to enable the department to ensure consistency in approach in teaching and create further opportunities for sharing best practice. The department is very successful in giving its students a wide range of learning opportunities. Many students extend this learning by participating in extra-curricular and community based clubs. Departmental links with the 'Activate' programme, with local education partners and sporting associations, enable students to continue their learning beyond college. For example many older students participate successfully in sixth form studies, take coaching qualifications, perform at national levels and regularly help teachers and students lower down the college. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection in adapting assessment procedures to National Curriculum levels and recording and reporting students' achievements. Present departmental action plans recognises the need to make use of this knowledge further to ensure students are aware of their present achievements and to give them a clear expectation of their next stage targets.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strength

- Students' positive and thoughtful attitudes provide a good basis for developing understanding of other people's beliefs and values.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment is below expected levels and students are under-achieving in the subject.
- Statutory requirements are not met because the agreed syllabus programmes of study are not implemented.
- There is not enough planned religious education within the citizenship curriculum to ensure that students receive their entitlement in the subject.
- The leadership and management of religious education within the citizenship department are unsatisfactory.
- Procedures for assessing and reporting students' progress in religious education are not in place.

223. Religious education is taught as part of a citizenship programme of work, which also includes elements of careers education and guidance, social education and health education. The subject is now part of a newly formed citizenship department. Religious education was not being taught during the inspection and there was insufficient evidence to make judgements about teaching and learning in the subject. In making judgements about standards, an analysis of students' work and discussions with groups of students in Years 9 and 11 were taken into account.
224. In the last two years there has been no GCSE work in religious education except for a very small group of students in Year 11 who are following a GCSE short course in extra lessons after college. The last group who were entered for GCSE in 1999 gained results at the higher grades that were broadly in line with national averages.
225. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are below the level expected by the agreed syllabus. In Year 9, students' knowledge and understanding of different religions are still at a basic level and they have difficulty in giving an account of what it

means to belong to a faith community. However, students do have some appreciation of how values and commitments influence attitudes and action, as in some recent work by Year 9 students on Martin Luther King in connection with work on racism. In Year 11, students have a sound understanding of some contemporary social and moral issues, such as crime and punishment, and aspects of medical ethics. Students' understanding of relevant religious perspectives however, is weak, especially of religions other than Christianity. At the moment students are under-achieving in religious education, mainly because they are not given enough opportunities to study the subject. Attitudes and behaviour in the citizenship lessons that were observed were generally good and helped to promote effective learning. Attitudes to religious education, expressed by students who were interviewed, were positive and thoughtful.

226. The college's provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements because the agreed syllabus programmes of study are not implemented. There is not enough planned religious education within the citizenship curriculum to ensure that students receive their entitlement in the subject. Assessment and reporting procedures are also not in place so parents cannot be informed of students' progress in the subject. Students use ICT effectively, both for research purposes and for presenting work. The overall direction of the citizenship curriculum is not clear enough, and the leadership and management of religious education within citizenship are unsatisfactory. The areas of weakness identified at the last inspection have not been fully addressed and the level of improvement is unsatisfactory, although the college anticipates that the re-organisation of the subject within citizenship will lead to improvement.



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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the 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 |
| <b>Advanced Subsidiary</b>            |                |                      |         |                      |         |                     |         |
| MATHEMATICS                           |                |                      | 70      |                      | 31      |                     | 2.2     |
| CHEMISTRY                             | 16             | 100                  | 86      | 62.5                 | 41      | 3.7                 | 2.8     |
| BIOLOGY                               | 22             | 100                  | 83      | 40.9                 | 34      | 3.2                 | 2.6     |
| PHYSICS                               | 22             | 86.4                 | 85      | 18.2                 | 40      | 2.0                 | 2.8     |
| DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY                 | 12             | 83.3                 | 83      | 58.3                 | 25      | 3.3                 | 2.3     |
| HOME ECONOMICS                        | 4              | 100                  | 88      | 50                   | 33      | 3.5                 | 2.6     |
| BUSINESS STUDIES                      | 25             | 100                  | 86      | 48                   | 27      | 3.4                 | 2.4     |
| ECONOMICS                             | 3              | 100                  | 89      | 100                  | 47      | 4.6                 | 3.42    |
| COMPUTER STUDIES                      |                |                      | 78      |                      | 20      |                     | 2.0     |
| ART & ART-TEXTILES                    | 31             | 87.1                 |         | 54.8                 |         | 3.5                 |         |
| THEATRE STUDIES (DRAMA)               | 15             | 100                  |         | 13.3                 |         | 2.2                 |         |
| GEOGRAPHY                             | 22             | 100                  | 90      | 72.7                 | 39      | 4.1                 | 2.9     |
| HISTORY                               | 9              | 100                  | 93      | 33.3                 | 42      | 2.7                 | 3.0     |
| SOCIOLOGY                             | 8              | 100                  | 82      | 25                   | 30      | 2.1                 | 2.4     |
| PSYCHOLOGY                            | 16             | 81.3                 | 83      | 6.3                  | 29      | 1.4                 | 2.4     |
| ENGLISH                               | 31             | 100                  | 93      | 64.5                 | 36      | 3.9                 | 2.9     |
| COMMUNICATION STUDIES (MEDIA STUDIES) | 8              | 100                  | 91      | 12.5                 | 35      | 2.1                 | 2.8     |
| FRENCH                                | 5              | 80                   | 90      | 20                   | 46      | 2.8                 | 3.1     |
| SPANISH                               | 5              | 60                   | 91      | 20                   | 47      | 1.6                 | 3.4     |
| GENERAL STUDIES                       | 26             | 92.3                 | 80      | 30.8                 | 26      | 2.7                 | 2.3     |
| <b>Advanced Supplementary</b>         |                |                      |         |                      |         |                     |         |
| ECONOMICS                             | 1              | 0                    | 22      | 0-                   | 73      | 0                   | 1.94    |
| MATHEMATICS                           | 6              | 83                   | 62      | 33                   | 15      | 2.5                 | 1.519   |
| MUSIC                                 | 4              | 100                  | 84      | 75-                  | 29      | 4.25                | 2.4     |
| SOCIOLOGY                             | 1              | 0                    | 63      | 0-                   | 7       | 0                   | 1.17    |

| Subject                                 | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|---|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|   |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| <b>GCE A-level and AVCE courses</b>     |                |                      |         |                      |         |                     |         |
| MATHEMATICS                             | 18             | 100                  | 87      | 22                   | 43      | 5.67                | 5.8     |
| CHEMISTRY                               | 11             | 100                  | 90      | 18                   | 43      | 4.91                | 5.9     |
| BIOLOGY                                 | 10             | 100                  | 88      | 20                   | 34      | 4.20                | 5.3     |
| PHYSICS                                 | 10             | 100                  | 88      | 30                   | 40      | 6.0                 | 5.7     |
| DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY                   | 9              | 100                  | 91      | 44                   | 30      | 6.67                | 5.4     |
| HOME ECONOMICS                          | 6              | 100                  | 83      | 33                   | 28      | 7.0                 | 4.7     |
| BUSINESS STUDIES                        | 22             | 100                  | 92      | 46                   | 32      | 6.5                 | 5.5     |
| ECONOMICS                               | 6              | 100                  | 89      | 33                   | 36      | 5.33                | 5.5     |
| COMPUTER STUDIES                        | 5              | 100                  | 80      | 100                  | 23      | 3.8                 | 4.6     |
| ART & DESIGN                            | 15             | 100                  | 96      | 80                   | 46      | 7.33                | 6.6     |
| MUSIC                                   | 1              | 100                  | 93      | 100                  | 35      | 8.0                 | 5.7     |
| GEOGRAPHY                               | 14             | 100                  | 92      | 64                   | 38      | 8.0                 | 5.7     |
| HISTORY                                 | 6              | 83                   | 88      | 17                   | 35      | 4.0                 | 5.5     |
| RELIGIOUS STUDIES                       | 4              | 100                  | 92      | 75                   | 38      | 7.0                 | 5.84    |
| SOCIOLOGY                               | 18             | 89                   | 86      | 39                   | 35      | 5.78                | 5.3     |
| ENGLISH LANGUAGE                        | 1              | 0                    | 91      | 0                    | 30      | 0                   | 5.27    |
| ENGLISH LITERATURE                      | 24             | 100                  | 95      | 17                   | 37      | 5.08                | 5.9     |
| COMMUNICATION STUDIES (THEATRE STUDIES) | 15             | 80                   | 93      | 33                   | 31      | 5.2                 | 5.5     |
| FRENCH                                  | 5              | 100                  | 89      | 20                   | 38      | 4.4                 | 5.6     |
| SPANISH                                 | 9              | 100                  | 89      | 0                    | 39      | 5.11                | 5.7     |
| GENERAL STUDIES                         | 27             | 85                   | 85      | 11                   | 30      | 4.0                 | 4.91    |

### POST-16 Vocational Qualifications

|                      |   |     |     |     |     |       |       |
|----------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| BUSINESS             | 9 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 13.33 | 10.45 |
| ENGINEERING          | 4 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 10.00 | N/A   |
| HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE | 6 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 7.00  | 10.79 |
| LEISURE & TOURISM    | 8 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 12.75 | 10.06 |

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In physics, at the 2001 examinations, the A-level results were in line with the national averages, but below average for the AS-level examination. At both levels the students' performance, compared with their GCSE results, was satisfactory. One very good lesson was observed in which full use was made by the teacher and students of the electronic whiteboard to produce a most interesting and stimulating lesson, where students used a computer simulation of Millikan's oil-drop experiment to find the charge on an electron.

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- Results showed a marked improvement on the previous year.
- Teaching and learning are very good; lessons are well structured which effectively helps students build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students have a sound grasp of basic concepts and apply them well in lessons.
- Teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good.

#### Areas for development

- The use of assessment and performance data to identify sharply focused targets for students.
- The distribution of teaching resources, which is uneven.
- The sharing of good practice to support improved learning.

227. In 2001 there was an insufficient number of students entered at AS-level to enable a valid judgement of comparison to be made. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were in line with the national average in terms of average point scores. The results showed a significant improvement compared to the previous year. All students entered for the examination achieved a pass grade or better. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades A and B has increased compared to the previous year but remains well below the national average. Both male and female students achieved well in relation to their performance at GCSE and a strong feature of the course was that completion rates were very high.
228. The standard of work of current students is above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well. In the lessons observed, students responded well as a result of effective teaching, which demands much of them. Lesson structure focuses their learning. In one lesson, students drew well on their previous knowledge of the rules of algebra to understand and solve equations involving algebraic fractions. In another, students made good use of their knowledge of statistics when investigating the distribution of data and the discrete random variable. Written work is well managed and presented, reflecting the same confidence as their work in class. The students persevere when difficulties arise in their learning. The inclusion of a student profile test after each completed topic is effective in maintaining progress and measuring achievement.
229. Students in Year 12 are achieving well. In one lesson observed, students comprehensively reviewed all aspects of trigonometry in preparation for a module

test. The students drew extensively on their previously taught skills and contributed confidently to classroom discussion with the teacher. Students have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when starting a new course module. In a mechanics lesson, both male and female students were intellectually challenged when replicating Galileo's investigation of motion and applying a simple mathematical model to make predictions based on Newton's laws. The students were well motivated, completing calculations correctly and forming judgements for refining the mathematical model further.

230. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good with some examples of excellent and very good teaching in Year 12 and the students learn well as a result. Teaching is characterised by good co-operative learning that takes place in all lessons between student and teacher. Teachers' planning, explanation and exposition are very good with questions that challenge students' thinking. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding support learning well. Teachers have high expectations of the students and work is intellectually stimulating and demanding. Very good use is made of the interactive whiteboard and television monitor to advance students' conceptual understanding rapidly, although sharing good practice is not as thorough as it should be to support learning, and the distribution of resources is uneven. Assessment procedures are good. Teachers are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses; however, individual needs are not dealt with in lessons. Written annotations as part of ongoing assessment should be more diagnostic and reflect a student's target grade expected at the end of the course. These are areas for improvement in the context of teaching that has many strong features.
231. Students learn well. They are attentive, co-operative, work productively, ask and respond well to questions, contributing to the rapid pace of many lessons. Students support one another effectively, talking and listening, but working for the most part independently. The students respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In a lesson leading towards an understanding of partial fractions, the teacher made good use of the students' previously learned skills. As a result the students appreciated the subtleties of the topic and made good progress. In another lesson, reference to Newton and Galileo enriched the content of the lesson by giving the students' work a historical context. Lessons last for the full duration of teaching time with many opportunities for extra tuition available.
232. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Good progress has been made in addressing issues raised in the previous report and, overall, there has been a satisfactory level of improvement since that time. There is clear educational direction moving the department towards more dynamic teaching methods and strategies that engage students fully in their learning. Resources such as ICT and the use of the interactive whiteboard have helped maintain the learning momentum that has already been achieved in the department.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching from well-qualified teachers, which brings about very good learning.
- Very effective use of ICT to illustrate and supplement teaching.
- A very well organised and efficient department, which is raising standards.

### Areas for improvement:

- More involvement of students in the formulation and development of ideas.
- A better stocked library to support independent learning.

233. In the 2001 A-level examination the attainment was below the national average, although the proportion receiving grades in the range A-E was above average. The achievement of this group of students, in the light of their GCSE grades, was satisfactory. At AS-level in 2001 all students gained grades in the range A-E and 62.5 per cent obtained grades A or B: this is well above the national average. The performance of these students relative to their GCSE grades was very good. Standards are rising in response to the implementation of new and effective teaching approaches. The number of students selecting sixth form chemistry is rising rapidly: it was six four years ago and is now 28. The retention rate is good; nearly all students who set out on AS/A2 courses complete them.
234. The standards of work seen in the present Year 13 are well above average and demonstrate good achievement when compared to the grades that they obtained at GCSE. Many are competent chemists, as they demonstrated during their revision periods. Here they revealed a good understanding of topics such as that involving predicting and explaining reactions of various rings and chains with functional groups. Knowledge of nucleophiles, electrophiles, inductive effects and acidity was utilised effectively.
235. Year 12 are achieving well. A class which was extending their GCSE knowledge of alkanes and alkenes demonstrated this. These students showed that they appreciated how alkenes performed addition reactions, in terms of electrophilic addition and also how sigma and pie bonds form with different properties.
236. Teaching is very good and the students learn very well as a result. The teachers have strong subject knowledge, which is used effectively to develop interest and to give perspective. There are crisp objectives, which are made clear to students. Usually the knowledge from the previous lesson is rehearsed to establish a suitable starting point and the new learning tested at the end. GCSE knowledge is checked and reinforced well. Strong features of the teaching are the clear explanations and the logical stepwise development of ideas, punctuated at intervals with questions to test understanding and to precipitate this before continuing on. It is this process which governs the pace of the lesson, thus maximising learning. Good use is made of ICT to aid understanding and to access data. PowerPoint presentations are used well, as are the intranet for e-mail and learning information, and the Internet as a data resource. This is illustrated by the PowerPoint presentation on addition reactions for alkenes employed in a Year 12 lesson, which was used well to illuminate the mechanisms involved. Whilst teaching is very good and enhanced by a wide range of effective strategies, some lessons do not really involve the students fully in the generation of ideas and their development, although they do give rise to and

encourage sound learning. Work, based upon past examination questions, is well marked with useful corrections and suggestions for improvement. Good homework is usually set; it complements and extends learning. The assessment by teachers does provide students with a good indication of their standards in relation to A2/AS grades.

237. The students' learning is very good. They take their tasks seriously and work hard at them. Their learning is enhanced by good relations with teachers. This has meant that they are not afraid to ask when they do not understand and that they both appreciate, and make use of, offers from teachers to give them further help out of college time. In most classes their willingness to listen and to work hard, together with the good relationships, generates a pleasant, but purposeful, working environment from which all benefit. Whilst they are keen to answer questions and to ask when they are confused, they generate few of their own. They are encouraged to be independent learners, but their approach is not very well structured. The main library offers good computer facilities, but it has very few good sixth form books and no scientific periodicals.
238. An entirely new team of staff came in two years ago. They are very well informed and effective teachers who interest the students and are constantly seeking for ways to improve standards. In this they have been very successful. The department is very well led and managed: this, together with the good teaching, has promoted the very good learning. All three sciences together form a very coherent and effective teaching unit. Assessment is well done and efficiently used to benefit both individual students and curriculum delivery. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, such as that to the Plymouth University Spectroscopy Unit, and the participation of teams in competitions. One of these was the RSC colleges analyst competition, where a team reached the final and was highly commended. Overall, the department's work has shown satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching from well-informed teachers promotes the good learning.
- A very well organised and effective department, which has developed good strategies for raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- More student involvement in the formulation and development of ideas.
- A better library to support independent learning.

239. In the 2001 A-level examination the attainment was below the national average. However, the numbers of students gaining grades in the range A-E was above it and has been rising for the past three years. Their achievement relative to their GCSE grades was unsatisfactory; to a considerable extent this was due to illness and other non-academic problems. At AS-level in 2001 all students obtained grades in the range A-E and 40.9 per cent A or B grades, which is above the national average. The numbers opting for sixth form biology are rising rapidly: three years ago there were ten and now there are 33. Almost all students who join the AS and A2 courses complete their studies.
240. The standards of work seen in the current Year 13 are high when compared to the grades that they achieved at GCSE. The students' high standards were exemplified

by a lesson in which they demonstrated a good understanding of the genetics and consequences of sickle cell anaemia, together with a capability to utilise the Hardy Weinberg Equation to discover the percentage of heterozygotes in European and African populations.

241. Students in Year 12 show a satisfactory standard; most are building upon their GCSE knowledge and skills well. This was shown by a group learning about the anatomical and physiological adaptations of cereals to various environments. They were able to appreciate the significance of xerophytic features and C4 photosynthesis.
242. The quality of teaching is good: no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Periods are well thought out to deliver definite objectives, which are made clear to the students. The teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and well used to produce interesting lessons, taught to high levels with broad perspectives. Most lessons incorporate a wide range of teaching strategies, thus promoting interest and wider understanding. Usually the knowledge from the previous period is checked to provide a suitable starting point with the new learning brought together and firmed up at the end. In the best lessons students' ideas are sought and they are stimulated to develop them with skilfully placed questions. Good use is made of ICT, both directly for teaching and via the intranet. There is use of e-mail and access to much data including PowerPoint presentations, questions and the Internet. In some lessons students are not fully involved in generating and developing ideas: these lessons are more like lectures punctuated by questions to test their understanding. The marking of test questions, based upon examination papers, is both regular and good. Students are given advice on how to improve and what went wrong. Assessments are related to AS/A2 grades and compared with predictions and targets. Suitably challenging homework is frequently set, requiring thought and research.
243. The quality of learning is good. The students work hard and most are keen to learn, although some are happier to be told and reassured by questioning than they are to reason for themselves. Learning is greatly helped by their good relations with teachers, which result in a productive two-way traffic. Thus individual progress is well monitored and supported with suitable targets for the future. Where students have problems with understanding they are invited to sort them out individually with the teacher in the teacher's own time. Students with special educational needs are well supported enabling them to become effective learners. The teachers do promote independent learning and give some guidance in this area, but it could be improved. The main library, whilst it offers good computer facilities, has a poor complement of sixth form books and no scientific periodicals to support research and a wider interest.
244. The subject is very well led and managed. There are good schemes of work, enabling the teachers to use their knowledge effectively to present the subject in sufficient depth for the students to access high grades. There are good systems for assessment, which are efficiently used to develop the students' work and to modify curriculum delivery. The curriculum is enhanced by an expanding programme of visits and fieldwork, such as the visit to Plymouth University Electron Microscope department. Also students have been involved in research projects, such as that at the Plymouth Marine Laboratory where they gained Gold Crest awards for their completed projects. In 2001 they took part in a work experience programme, which involved joining academics at Plymouth University for a week to carry out an intensive research project. There are sound entry criteria embracing both GCSE performance in science and also in subjects outside this, thus ensuring a realistic probability of a successful outcome. Students and staff work well together towards good and well-

defined expectations. This is an effective and well-organised department, always seeking ways to improve. The level of improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. It is therefore no surprise to find that both standards and recruitment are rising.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus was on two design technology subjects: product design, and systems and control. Home economics and engineering were sampled. In home economics, examination results were well above the national average in 2001. Students did as well as, and sometimes better than, expected, when account is taken of their GCSE results. The engineering vocational courses results for 2001 were good: all passed. Two lessons of home economics were observed and both were very good. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject matter enabled the students to plan and execute investigations in depth. During the observation of the engineering lesson, students were preparing for their unit examination and the teacher provided a range of information and explanations on a variety of topics that helped the students to consolidate their knowledge and understanding to good effect.

### **Design technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Results for design technology have been consistently good for several years. The results in 2001 were well above the national average.
- Teaching is overall very good; lessons are well structured and are designed to build on previous knowledge via a range of interesting activities.
- The teaching is shared by four members of staff and uses their personal expertise very effectively.
- Students are highly self-motivated and take a mature approach to their studies. The students share ideas and knowledge, especially when Year 12 and 13 are taught together.
- The courses are well managed using a range of good resources, and links with industry and local higher education institutions are used very effectively.
- Regular marking, discussion and assessment of work help students to produce high quality work.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Several of the lessons are timetabled outside the normal college day and, although student attendance is good, the extended day puts added pressures on staff and students.

245. The AS-level examination results in 2001 were well above average in both systems control and product design. A-level results in 2001 were also above average with all students gaining C grade or above. In 2000, an electronics group was exceptional with all eight candidates gaining A/B grades. Very few students do not complete the courses and, in relation to their GCSE results, students do better than expected.

246. The standard of work seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 is mainly well above average. This success is a result of very good teaching and the students' positive attitude to work. The teachers' own very good subject knowledge together with their thorough planning of lessons, enable students to understand difficult concepts thoroughly. The continual monitoring of the students' progress has helped



to raise the standards and quality of their case studies and major projects. In a systems and control lesson, Years 12 and 13 students benefited from very good discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of two types of logic families. Very good individual guidance was given by the teacher to help students to improve and extend their graphical annotated ideas on constructing aluminium candle holders in a product design lesson. The majority of students have a good understanding of the properties and range of materials and select appropriately for their major projects. The designing skills of the students are at, or above, levels expected in Year 13 and they use a range of graphical ideas and techniques to record their initial and ultimately their selected ideas for their products. A high attaining Year 13 systems and control student is doing some very detailed research and testing in his development of circuits to make a portable weather station to be used for educational purposes. Another able Year 13 student is producing an extensive variety of annotated sketches of his ideas for the development of foldaway drop-down steps. His folder work is of an exceptionally high standard.

247. Students in Year 12 have successfully completed one term and are achieving well. Their mature approach to the subject has meant that in product design they have acquired a variety of good graphical skills. They understand the uses and properties of materials and what effect the use of these materials have on the environment.
248. Most students are competent in the use of ICT. Year 12 product design students are currently mastering the use of up-to-date desktop publishing software and this is helping them to use ICT drawing skills for developing their designs of aluminium boxes. In the theory lessons observed, students were revising for examinations together with their teachers. Good discussion between the groups indicated a wide range of understanding and an ability to extract the main points from each question. A group in product design in Year 13 is, with the prompting of the teacher, able to identify the main criteria for designing and developing a new tap for a disabled person. In both years the students, male and female, are making good progress.
249. Students in Years 12 and 13 are very attentive and attend regularly, including the lessons timetabled outside the college day. In the group where Years 12 and 13 are taught together, the Year 12 students gain a great deal from their fellow Year 13 students and the group is extremely productive. The students are very enthusiastic and delight in articulating their case studies and projects to others. Their commitment to the subject is evident in the non-timetable time they spend in the department using the expertise and resources to develop their projects. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and the students respond well to the humour they share and the responsibility they are given. They work well with all the teachers and appreciate the time and effort the teachers give in an effort to improve the standard of their work. Post-16 students are seen to be a great motivator to the younger students in the college and many share their ideas in what they are doing with students from Years 7 to 11.
250. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well as a result. An important feature of the teaching is that both subjects are taught by more than one teacher. The teaching organisation is planned to be delivered using the teachers' individual specialisms. They teach specific aspects of the course and the students benefit from this well-managed provision. The teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and they include a range of activities, which build on previous knowledge. The teachers' attention to detail extends students' understanding and their learning. The very good individual marking via annotation and discussion contributes greatly to raising students' standards of work. Teachers' expectations are high and students are

continually challenged to improve or develop their ideas more fully. Lessons are planned so that discussion and exchanging of ideas encourage students to ask searching questions. Work is set to be done out of lesson and deadline dates for completion are given. Case studies and project completion dates deadlines are generally met.

251. The leadership and management of the sixth form courses in design technology are good. This has led to a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The dedicated teachers contribute greatly to the success of the post-16 students. Regular reviews are done of which appropriate courses should be offered and the new AS and A-level courses have been thoroughly planned and resourced. Teachers have attended professional development courses and developed strong links with local industry in order to widen students' experiences. The students confidently use CAD and CAM facilities and other major equipment. The awarding of the prestigious Arkwright Scholarships to the design technology students on a regular basis, is a tribute to the high standards they consistently achieve within the department.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus was on business education, within which economics was sampled. In the one lesson seen in economics, teaching and learning were good and students are achieving well.

### **Business studies**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students' attainment and learning seen during the inspection were good.
- The curriculum is well planned to cater for the needs of the full range of students entering sixth form business education.
- Teaching is good.
- Procedures for assessing students' work are very good, especially in the AVCE course

#### **Areas for improvement**

- More demands should be placed on a minority of students, particularly those who are lower attainers, to encourage them to become more active learners.

252. The department offers business studies and economics separately at GCE AS and A2 levels, and an AVCE in business studies. Attainment in A-level business studies has been high overall since the last inspection in 1997, although there was a dip in 2000. In 2001, results were again above average, particularly at the top grades, and this success also extended to the first results of the new AS course. Only one candidate failed to get a pass grade at A-level in the four years. 2001 saw the last results of the GNVQ advanced business course, and they showed attainment well above average, continuing an established trend of 100 per cent pass rates and a very high proportion of merit and distinction grades. In economics A-level over the last four years, all students completed successfully, with results in 2001 in line with the national average, while at AS-level the very small group got very good results. The department is very good at boosting students' achievement, and across all subjects and levels they consistently do better than expected. No consistent difference was seen in the performance of boys and girls.

253. The overall standard of work seen in the inspection is above average and reflects good achievement on the part of students with respect to their previous results. For example, in an AVCE class, students worked hard and successfully to explore the relevance of income elasticities in the business environment, and the implications of joining the Eurozone. In an AS class they showed confidence and skill in defining and developing their use of concepts such as opportunity cost and monopolistic competition. Attention to basics is good, and they are able to make links with previous work and build on it, for example in a class on locational factors in business, where they brought in techniques of break-even analysis from a previous unit. ICT is used well, particularly in portfolio work, where good presentation and research skills are shown, for instance in the quality of a questionnaire to Woolworth's that formed part of an AVCE file. These pieces are well organised and invariably word processed to a good standard; descriptive tasks in particular are very well done, although there is some lack of analytical depth amongst lower and middle attainers. Work is often imaginative, for example in a treatment of the Theatre Royal business objectives, or in a discussion of the use of ICT by the B & Q chain.
254. Teaching overall is good. Teachers have a comprehensive grasp of their subject matter and an enthusiasm for putting it across. At its best, they place great emphasis on students working hard to acquire knowledge and understanding by themselves. There is constant feedback, and assessment takes place continuously through protracted question and answer. Planning is sound and the pace of lessons typically demanding, and these provide a good basis for learning, as seen for example in a class on the competitive business environment which covered a range of complex issues and concepts in which students achieved well. Generally, expectations are high and encouragement is used extensively, for instance in a challenge to students to produce quality answers within a time constraint in a revision class on market systems. Individual help is always given, questions are varied to match students' abilities, and a common feature of the teaching is a commitment to involve everybody at some stage of the lesson. A co-operative and adult learning atmosphere is promoted, with good relationships between students, and between students and teacher. Assessment procedures are very well devised, especially in AVCE, where checking and progress review procedures ensure that students fulfil requirements.
255. Typically, students learn well. This is mainly the result of good teaching, which gives them the opportunity to acquire and extend their knowledge and understanding. Also, the positive relationships in classes allow the teacher to explore a range of ideas in a more informal setting, and the students respond well and are seen to take responsibility for their own learning. The independence of their approach is particularly seen in their portfolios; they are good at researching and using their own initiative, and this self-motivated learning is a strong feature. Participation in class is mostly good, for example in a class in operations management where students showed interest and commitment throughout. Sometimes they can be more passive, but even here teacher persistence ensures that learning takes place. Overall, the quality of learning is good and leads on to above average attainment and good progress.
256. The department is well led and has a strong, well-qualified team. The course options are comprehensive and well suited to the range of students taking on business education, and curriculum review in the light of changing needs is a strong aspect of planning. It is not possible to comment on progress made from the last inspection as there was no report on the department at that time.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The college offers the new AVCE course as either a three- or six-unit award, together with key skills qualifications for those students following courses under the Tamar Valley Consortium arrangements. In addition, a range of other courses also operates to enhance the competence of non-specialist students, although these are not compulsory. Overall, standards in specialist work are above average, with students showing good achievement. Teaching and learning are good.

### Information and communication technology

Overall the quality of provision in ICT is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Good teaching, which ensures that students achieve well.
- Students are very positive about the work that they do, contributing to the progress that they make.
- The new AVCE course is proving particularly effective in helping those with lower GCSE grades to make very good progress and achieve well.
- Students benefit from ready access to computers and high quality software.

#### Areas for improvement

- Key skills work needs sharpening.
- Students following AVCE courses would benefit from greater opportunities to develop the vocational aspects of the subject more fully.

257. To date, no students have completed the full six-unit AVCE course. However, a range of assessments over the work to date suggests that male and female students alike are gaining above average results, and that they are showing good achievement in relation to their earlier GCSE results. Lower attainers, in particular, show very good achievement, gaining significantly higher grades than would be expected in relation to their GCSE scores. Almost all of the students entered for the key skills qualification or other certification, such as CLAIT, obtained the award at the appropriate level. Course retention rates are good; relatively few students have left the courses after an initial settling-in period, and a number joined from other subjects.
258. In work seen, standards are above average for students following specialist courses, whether at AVCE or as certificated key skills. The students concerned show good achievement overall, but lower attainers at GCSE, who are more often male students, are showing very good achievement on the AVCE courses. In part, this reflects the nature of the course, but also it results from good teaching. The AVCE students have a good knowledge and understanding of the work done in presenting and analysing information, building on their earlier work in the main college. Lower attainers can find it harder to master, and to really understand, the more advanced features required in data handling, for example framing multiple searches or logical expressions. Students are confident users of Internet sources for research, and Year 13 AVCE students of all attainment levels have at least a sound understanding of how the Internet works. There are some impressive examples of webpage authoring which show both technical competence and an understanding of how potential users would use the site. Students of all attainment levels use technical terms accurately and write clearly when describing what they have done. However, lower attainers tend to be less good at evaluating their work in writing, although they can often demonstrate a more secure oral competence. Students demonstrate a good range of skills in

application of number, for example when working with spreadsheets or when designing databases. Portfolios show that they produce accurate graphs that are fit for purpose.

259. Students who are not following either an AVCE or one of the certificated key skills courses have lower standards of attainment. For example, when presenting work, they tend to use very basic text processing with minimal enhancement to make their work match a user's needs. This group also makes only limited use of spreadsheets in their work; for example, several students merely used them as templates for text tables. Whilst most students can access the Internet to further researches for their subjects, their searching is less well structured than their specialist peers.
260. Teaching is good and leads to good learning throughout the courses. Strengths lie in the factual knowledge of the teachers, and particularly in their knowledge of the assessment arrangements for the subject. Assessments are accurate, and students receive very helpful comments on draft work in order to help them to improve. Whilst expectations are high, for example using the specifications for A grade work to illustrate how to improve a report, the range of teaching methods used by teachers is narrower than in the main school. Much teaching is concerned with supporting individuals working at the keyboard; there is little evidence of group work. There is rarely a starting or finishing plenary to set the scene, refresh memories as to purpose, or to teach directly the key concepts required. Teaching also tends to stick closely to the chosen scheme. This means that some lower attainers are working mechanically through tasks in an uncritical manner, and with little thought for how the concepts might be applied to real problems. At present, students have little contact with real world applications of computers, for example through some parts of their assignments. Students are positive about their work and almost always behave well in formal and informal sessions; they enjoy good relationships with their teachers and with each other.
261. The subject received little mention at sixth form level at the last inspection so no judgement can be made on improvement. Leadership of the subject is good, establishing a secure platform of AVCE work. More work is now needed to improve the basic skills of those students who do not, at present, follow a formal course in ICT. The college is aware of this, and has well-formulated and appropriate plans for the coming academic year. Resources are very good, both for specialist sixth form work and for supporting other subjects. Students have ready access to Internet-linked computers and to modern software.

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

The focus was on the new course of leisure and recreation at AVCE level. The course is organised from the geography department, and also draws on specialists from other departments.

### **Leisure and recreation**

Overall the quality of provision in leisure and recreation is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- The department's experience with the predecessor course (GNVQ Advanced leisure and tourism), and its record of results, are very good.
- There are strong and effective links with the business and physical education departments, and with the wider community of sports and leisure.

- Procedures for assessing students' work are very good.

#### **Area for improvement**

- More attention should be paid to providing for the learning needs of lower attaining students.

262. Attainment in leisure and tourism GNVQ Advanced in the three years to 2001 has been consistently high, with a majority of grades at merit and distinction level – for example, 88 per cent as against 60 per cent nationally in 2001. These results are well above the average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Students have also made very good progress, and their achievements have been higher than might be expected from their qualifications on entering the course. The department has added value to the students' education.
263. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection, in class and in the scrutiny of work, was average. A number of good elements are present; for example, in a class on 'recreation in action' students were able confidently to apply planning, budgeting and marketing procedures to different types of leisure events. They collaborated well, showed good use of key skills, and were able to bring in work from a previous unit. Where classroom standards were seen to be average overall, it was because lower attaining students were making slower progress and there was a lack of extension into higher level work and understanding. This is also the case with their portfolio work, although basic descriptive work is well done. The department used to run an intermediate course to bridge the gap between GCSE and advanced study, and might consider reintroducing it for these students. Generally, assignment work is of a good standard; it is very well presented and makes good use of ICT. At its best it is highly thoughtful and analytical, employing a variety of methods in research and showing initiative and independent learning, for example in a project explaining the organisation and running of a local volleyball competition.
264. Only three classes were observed, but in these the teaching overall was satisfactory. There are several good features, for example in the careful and continuous use of assessment through question and answer, a strength which is extended to the evaluation of portfolio work, where meticulous and accurate appraisal of written assignments promotes positive learning. Class planning and structure are clear, and there is an emphasis on an individual approach to students' needs. Resources such as video are used well, as in a class project studying a National Heritage special event, and teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and is enthusiastically conveyed. A strength of the subject organisation is the ability to draw on specialist teachers from the business and sports areas to produce a coherent course in this applied educational field. Good, relaxed relationships are fostered within the classroom, and this has a positive effect on learning. Where teaching was less strong, expectations were moderate, and opportunities were missed to extend students' understanding at a higher level, for example in the more effective use of technical language.
265. The learning seen was also satisfactory overall. It is often good where students are committed to independent learning and are very willing to have a go for themselves. They respond well to the positive and co-operative learning atmosphere, and student interaction and collaboration can be very fruitful. They will take initiatives, as in a Year 12 brainstorming session on business planning in the leisure area, where they willingly took chairing roles and fed back findings to the group. There is much evidence of independent learning also in their portfolios. However, not all learning is

as good as this, and they are sometimes rather passive in the classroom, and fail to develop their written assignments with sufficient rigour.

266. The course enjoys strong leadership and well-qualified staff, and their track record in this subject area is very good. The head of department is committed to producing high standards in this new AVCE course. It is not possible to comment on progress made in the light of the last inspection as there was no specific report at that time.

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

The focus was on art and design and on theatre studies. One Year 12 lesson was seen in communication studies (media). In this lesson, the teaching and learning were good and standards observed were above average.

### **Art and design**

Overall the provision in art and design is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Examination results were above average in 2001.
- Teaching is good overall and students are encouraged to work independently.
- The subject is well managed and led.
- The college has good links with external bodies, which are used to good effect.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There is an over-reliance on traditional processes, media and materials.
- Assessment and recording procedures need to be improved.
- Better provision for a work-related vocational curriculum is needed.

267. In 2000 and 2001 the GCE examination results were above the national average for students at this level. In 2001 all 14 students achieved the top grades A or B. There was a decline in the percentage of students achieving grades A or B in textiles in 2001. The college's results are within the range of the top 40 per cent of schools and colleges across the country.

268. In the work seen in the inspection, students demonstrate that they make very good progress from the end of Year 11 through Year 12 in the sixth form. Year 12 students have developed the capability for sustaining effort over time. Most have also acquired sound technical skills in working with a range of different media and materials. The higher attaining students develop their own concepts and ideas, which are then interpreted and communicated effectively through art and design activities. Most have acquired the capacity to think with a good degree of independence, are productive and work at a good pace. Most work in a controlled and disciplined manner. They show initiative and are prepared to explore the characteristics of various media and materials to achieve their intended outcomes. By Year 13, students have gained in confidence and are prepared to communicate their attitudes, values and beliefs through their art and design work. They now possess the capacity to locate interesting and complex problems for themselves, which they set out to resolve with very little dependence on their teachers. Visual diaries are used well to collect relevant research material from both primary and secondary sources. They have acquired a much deeper understanding of the art and design process and they now have the capability to develop this initial research material and produce interesting and complex final pieces of art and design work in two and three dimensions. The

majority of students demonstrate their capacity for independent thinking and working through the range, quality and variety of ideas contained in these visual diaries. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and there is much one-to-one discussion about the work. Assessment is carried out regularly on this informal basis and oral feedback provided for students.

269. Teaching is good overall at this level. Teachers carry out effective planning and organisation of lessons is good. They possess sound background knowledge and understanding which they use to guide, inform and support students. The main emphasis however, is placed on encouraging students to develop their independence when carrying out research from which they will work to develop final pieces of art and design work. At regular intervals students are asked to discuss their work with other members of the group and to justify the decisions that they have taken and the choices that they have made. Generally speaking teachers set clear objectives for students, as a consequence of which they know what must be achieved within set time limits. Although, by this stage, students are largely responsible for determining their own pace of working, teachers are always on hand to ensure that ideas are moved forward in a structured and a coherent manner. Students are actively discouraged from working mechanistically to produce poorly researched final pieces of work in two or three dimensions. Students' work is usually assessed on an informal basis involving one-to-one discussion between the teacher and individual students. There is a need for a more formal process of assessment that is written and recorded and can be used subsequently to analyse each individual student's achievements and to provide informed feedback on attainment and progress.
270. Most students have adopted a very positive approach to their learning and it is readily apparent that they are keen to develop their own ideas and concepts through art and design activities. They apply themselves conscientiously to the task of acquiring appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills which will enable them to communicate their ideas and express their feelings. The majority of these students continue to work with traditional media and materials such as water colour paint, acrylic paint, charcoal and pastels. Many carry out independent research at home, away from the college confines. They make substantial use of books as source material but currently insufficient use of modern technology in the form of photography and ICT generally. Students with special educational needs are well incorporated into the group.
271. Leadership and management are good. Students are given ample opportunity to develop their ideas, concepts, attitudes and world views through art and design activities in a traditional well-structured and supportive learning environment. They are challenged through the briefs that are set which are usually derived from GCE examination specifications. The students are encouraged, on occasions, to devise their own briefs that have arisen out of their own real-world experiences. Students are actively encouraged to explore the work of other artists, designers and craftspeople from within their own and other cultures. The systems for monitoring and evaluating achievement need to be improved, however. In addition to informal verbal assessment, it is important that a detailed and accurate written record of students' achievements be maintained to provide considered feedback to individual students. Such information should be used by students to improve their learning. There are currently no courses available that are designed to meet the needs of those students who are interested in work-related learning in art and design and such courses would strengthen provision in the subject.



## Theatre studies

Overall, the provision for theatre studies is **good**.

### Strengths

- Strong teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships between staff and students.
- A positive contribution to the life of the college and students' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Written work is sparse and requires improvement.
- Screening of course applicants to ensure that students are able to achieve course requirements.

272. Advanced level theatre studies currently attract relatively few students nationally and therefore national comparison data is unreliable. A-level results for 2001 are broadly in line with course requirements. The results are a confirmation of recent trends. Results of the 2001 AS tests indicate similar standards.
273. Work seen during the inspection is average overall. Some students enter the course without having studied drama at GCSE or with a lower average points score than in other subjects. Entry is below the national average and achievement at the end of Year 13 is good. Students use specialist technical vocabulary naturally and fluently; they always refer to the text to back up their opinions; they are sensitive to a sense of audience and can understand and put into practice the role of director. Students empathise with character and theme and can portray nuances of voice. At the beginning of the course some students are more hesitant but the strengths of the relationships between teachers and students and students themselves encourage practical exploration and mutual trust. The written requirements of the course are less developed and evidence of written work shows that it is sparse and below average. This is partly because of the comparatively low attainment of some of the students and partly because it has previously not been prioritised by the department.
274. The teaching of theatre studies is good and provides a depth and breadth to the curriculum. It incorporates teaching styles which clearly develop the learning of the students. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. At the same time; requirements for students to develop their own portfolios of work, visit theatres and empathise with others; develop their independence. Specialists are committed to the subject and teach drama and contribute to the wider education it affords the students. Teaching is well paced and controlled. It concentrates on the achievements of the students and is celebratory. All teaching seen is good or very good combining verve and enthusiasm of the staff and students and detailed knowledge and understanding aimed at developing students' personal and academic achievement. In one Year 13 lesson, students spoke authoritatively, using specialist vocabulary, about directing, staging and acting. In a Year 12 lesson, students combined commitment and maturity to analyse deep philosophical questions on love. The motivation and enthusiasm of the students are very good. Their practical work is well presented and organised. However, their written work does not develop their research skills and independent learning. Lessons are well prepared and all students gain the maximum insight into the subject as well as gaining knowledge of a wide range of sophisticated drama skills.

275. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained as has the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum is rich and varied; extra-curricular activities include academic lessons after college in order to improve standards as well as dramatic presentations both in college and as part of the local community. The lack of a large, dedicated performing space means that large-scale musicals cannot be undertaken. Assessment is not rigorous and does not include clear, graded marking or targets for improvement. The department is working on the teaching and assessment of written work as a priority. The head of department has a clear vision, mutual staff support and a single-minded commitment to drama both as a subject and as a method for developing the whole person, and there is good capacity in the department to improve further.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus was on geography and psychology. Geography is a popular subject in the sixth form and most students complete the course. A significant number of students progress to courses with a geographical content at higher education. AS and A-level courses are offered. Psychology is an increasingly popular subject and is offered at AS and A2 levels.

### **Geography**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Examination results are well above average.
- Students make very good progress because the teaching is very good.
- Students are interested and have excellent attitudes towards their work in the subject.
- Excellent marking and homework reinforce students' learning.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of ICT to support learning is not fully developed.
- Target setting is not used to formally monitor students' progress.

276. In the 2001 A-level examination results were very high. They were in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion achieving the highest grades was very high. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade. No student has failed A-level in the past four years. Students' performance in geography was considerably better than in most of their other subjects. AS-level results in 2001 were also well above average. Again, all achieved at least a pass grade and the proportion of students with the highest grades was well above the national average. Student achievement in 2001 from their prior attainment at GCSE was very good.
277. The standards of work seen in Year 13 are well above average. This also represents a very good level of achievement. Students in Year 13 show very good breadth and depth of knowledge when discussing the possible impact of global warming on the environment in different areas of the world. Most are able to link factors from different parts of the syllabus well so that their answers contain both human and physical geography aspects. This was particularly apparent in a lesson in which the causes of poverty in the United Kingdom as compared with Peru were discussed. The level of debate is often very sophisticated with the students taking the lead in offering challenging alternatives. Their written work shows a concise style, includes relevant points and, in the work of the higher attaining students, good examples. Students'

fieldwork investigations show good understanding of statistical techniques. They analyse data very well and to come to valid, clearly expressed conclusions.

278. Standards in Year 12 are also well above average. Again, judged against their attainment on entering the sixth form, their achievement is very good. Fieldwork techniques that students met earlier in the college are developed much further in Year 12. In one lesson, students understood the need for great care in formulating questions to be used in developing a questionnaire to obtain results that were accurate and manageable. They present their work to the rest of the group with clarity and confidence.
279. Teaching is very good. As a result all students make very good progress with their learning. The best teaching is characterised by the very good subject knowledge of the teachers. This enables them to prompt discussion with different ways of tackling examination questions and to give valid extra examples. It also enables them to successfully answer questions posed by the students. Teaching is very well organised. A great number of up-to-date resources from newspapers and geographical periodicals are used to enhance student's knowledge and to provide wide-ranging examples. The 'Student Guide' provided for all students by their teachers is a particularly valuable resource and contains numerous tips on how to improve their work.
280. The methods used in the classroom make the students think continuously. Questioning is pointed and demanding. How students can get marks in the examinations is repeatedly emphasised. Students are encouraged to explore topics intellectually and to express their opinions. In more than one lesson the students instigated discussion on a particular topic. The standard of discussion is very high with all students participating. Their attitude towards the subject is excellent. Their high level of interest and commitment to their work in geography is a major reason for the high levels of attainment and achievement.
281. The provision of homework is excellent. It is used very effectively to consolidate and extend students' experiences. Students are encouraged to use a wide variety of source materials for research. Most are comfortable in seeking information by using the Internet. Teachers offer very good support to the students who value this aspect of the teaching. This is particularly evident in the preparation for their coursework. In one lesson, each student received an individual tutorial with their teacher on the introduction to their coursework so that they could proceed in an accurate manner. The marking of students' work is excellent. Teachers' comments are detailed, helpful and focused on improving attainment. Assessments are given regularly and are used by teachers to see how each student is progressing and to give appropriate guidance. However, target grades, based upon their prior attainment, are not given to students. As a result, there is no formal pattern for discussion about students' progress and the steps they need to take to improve. The use of ICT as an integral part of teaching throughout the sixth form courses is not fully developed.
282. Most students like the subject. They rate the teaching as being very good. They feel that the relationship between teacher and student is very good. They are confident that they receive very good help and support from their teachers. Year 12 students have found the transition from GCSE to GCE AS-level comparatively smooth because of the good teaching.
283. The leadership and management of sixth form geography are very good. Teachers are committed to raising standards and fully understand how this is to be achieved.

The team of teachers work well together. The curriculum is well planned and builds successfully upon students' prior knowledge. Enrichment opportunities are good. These include outside speakers, visits to local factories and conferences at Plymouth University. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Students' attitudes and interests.
- The development of personal and learning skills.
- The curriculum matches external requirements and is a good response to local circumstances.

### Areas for improvement

- Current standards in Year 13, which are below the national average.
- Ongoing assessment procedures to influence planning and diagnosis of learning needs.
- The formal and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning in the subject.
- An increase in the range of teaching strategies to involve students more in their own learning.

284. The first AS psychology results in 2001 were well below the national average. The proportion obtaining the higher grade pass (A-B) was well below the national figure. The proportion of students obtaining at least a pass grade (A-E) was very close to the national average.
285. In the work seen in the inspection, students currently in Year 13 are producing work that is of below average standard. These students have made satisfactory progress in attaining key learning skills to aid learning. They actively use ICT skills to undertake psychological research, and literacy skills initiatives by the department have improved writing skills. The most able students comment effectively on exemplar treatment of research results. However, most replication research studies presently undertaken are below the standards expected. For example, in discussions and in lessons the majority of students struggle to express themselves accurately about the protocol for the framework and design of psychological experiments. The college did not monitor the achievements of these students on entry to the sixth form and many started the course with a background that leaves them struggling with the scientific and statistical elements of the A-level course.
286. Students in Year 12 are making sound progress and they are achieving satisfactorily. They have more relevant expertise on entry to the course and generally have a better understanding of psychological concepts than Year 13 students. In a lesson on research design the most able students show a good understanding of experiments and their role in shaping theory. The majority of students at this stage understand aspects of social relationships and how experiments can show behaviour being influenced by external pressures. The lower attaining students have passive responses in lessons and struggle to keep up with the pace of teaching. Students' folders show significant differences in the amount of research being done outside lessons. The least able require advice and further challenge on how to organise their work and prioritise the key areas of learning.

287. Overall, the teaching of AS and A-level psychology is satisfactory. Teachers ensure that students understand clearly the aims of the lesson in preparation for learning. Important research references and prepared notes are consistently given to enable learning and to set extended studying. Good use is made of resources, especially the psychology website which students can access through intranet connections. Teachers place emphasis on the use of key words and terminology to emphasise the traditional aspects of psychological theory. Teaching style is inconsistently matching student needs. Teachers have a tendency to give over-long, and sometimes confusing, explanations of difficult material. More successful strategies, such as paired work and 'brainstorming', improve the pace and rigour of learning. Present strategies for monitoring short-term learning are unsatisfactory. Teachers do not check sufficiently that key aspects have been understood. For example, in one lesson two key pieces of research on social influence were given to students. The plenary did not consider the conventional psychological protocol of why one experiment proves or disproves the other. Previous assessments have indicated that many students are struggling with the concept of research design but planning for the next stage is not taking sufficient account and considering strategies to overcome this.
288. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic about psychology. However, in both Years 12 and 13 many students are unable to express themselves clearly in discussion. In accordance with the teachers' guidance some make use of private study time well. Further requests and checking procedures to ensure students research and prepare for the next aspect of study are needed to increase interaction in the classroom.
289. The department is in its second year and the college has prioritised the introduction of psychology as a key area for development. The subject is enthusiastically led and managed and both the college and teachers are determined to improve teaching and standards further. The subject is proving a popular choice at AS-level and the present AS group is the largest in Year 12. The department is effectively establishing itself as a valuable community centre for study with a significant number of students travelling from partner institutions. The present assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and undermine progress. The recording of students' achievements is not being used to influence next stage planning or to specifically diagnose individual learning needs. Students are not made sufficiently aware of target grades and whether their present achievement is matching prior predictions. Teachers in the department are inexperienced in dealing with the syllabus being studied and the best way to deliver the curriculum is still very much under review. With this in mind the college needs to establish short and longer-term action plans for the subject with appropriate reviewing and monitoring procedures. Similarly, a teacher appraisal and monitoring structure is needed in order that professional developmental targets may be set.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus was on English language and literature and French. A GCSE English re-sit lesson was also seen. The provision was good and focused clearly on the students' learning needs regarding answering examination questions. Its effectiveness is undermined by the low time allocation of lesson per week. Work in Spanish was also sampled. Spanish is equally popular to French because of the equal status of the two languages in the college. Students can follow either AS or A2 courses in either language. In 2001 A-level and AS-level Spanish results were below average overall. An AS lesson and an A-level lesson were observed and in both, the teaching was good.

## English

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

### Strengths

- A significant improvement in 2001 AS results and in standards seen.
- The enthusiastic teaching motivates the students.
- Teachers ensure a very good match of learning tasks with learning objectives, to good effect on standards.
- The quality of marking and feedback.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of data to set targets and to monitor progress.
- The need to enhance systematic evaluation to extend best practice.

290. The English literature and language course is a new course. In 2001 students took A-level in literature only. Results were below the national average. All students achieved an A-E grade but the proportion at A/B was below average. Female students performed slightly better than male. Overall results were broadly average for 1998 to 2000. The 2001 results for the Year 12 students who sat the AS language and literature paper showed a significant improvement on the results in the literature only paper. Some 64.5 per cent gained grades A/B; all gained A-E; 93 per cent were at C or higher. Male students did better than female.
291. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are well above average, matching their AS examination results. They are achieving standards that are higher than would have been anticipated by their GCSE results. They respond with a high degree of motivation to their teachers' considerable enthusiasm and high expectations. They talk positively about the enjoyment provided by the breadth of the course. They like the contrast between writing analytically, personally and creatively in a range of genres. In lessons they make good progress because the learning activities are directly targeted on achieving learning objectives. In one lesson they made very good use of a matrix to analyse the discourse features of a dialogue in terms of gender and power.
292. Students in Year 12 are achieving well. They have handled the transition from GCSE well, not least in understanding the degree of detail with which they have to analyse a text. They responded very positively to the teacher's caution for the need for open mindedness when they started their study of Dr Johnson's 'Rasselas'. They proceeded to draw thoughtful contrast between the text and Bryson's 'The Lost Continent', which they had previously studied. They support each other well in discussions. Given the range of attainment in the groups there is some scope for more targeting of questions and tasks to support the lower attainers.
293. Teaching is very good overall. The teachers have researched the requirements of the course with the greatest thoroughness and are consequently well informed about it. Lesson activities are closely related to the learning objectives, which reflect the course specification. The teachers have high expectations. Their use of questioning is very good. They probe well to draw out strong arguments from the students. Their marking is informative and the students confirm the helpfulness of the feedback they receive. Teachers set homework frequently, often requiring independent research such as exploring websites to research the contemporary background to writers such

as Carroll or Johnson. Teaching is well targeted on the skills the students need to develop for examinations. In one lesson, Year 13 students used the analytical grid well to analyse talk in a Pinter extract and this clearly enhanced their understanding. The teachers expect the students to work hard and this results in a large amount of written work, in terms of both assignments and preparatory notes. Underpinning all these qualities, however, is the enthusiasm of the teachers, which transmits to the students and engages a positive response.

294. The students make clear gains in learning as a result of their teachers' expertise and methods. Their work over time shows increasing maturity in expression and competence in a range of genres. Another notable development is the increasing rigour with which the students independently draft and re-draft their work. They make great gains in the correct use of the considerable range of technical vocabulary that is a strong feature of the course. One student's analysis of everyday talk in 'Much Ado about Nothing' revealed an in-depth understanding of text and characters. They attempt ambitious projects in their transformation pieces such as the carefully crafted reworking of a Wendy Cope poem into a moving image text. The students' development of characters and settings effectively crystallised the poem's themes.
295. The nature of the course enhances the students' independent work. They confirm the positive impact the course has had on their written work in other subjects, especially in the construction of essays. The course has triggered and consolidated a greater interest in reading, and a greater interest in language. Several students referred to instinctively analysing texts and discourse in a range of situations beyond their lives at college. Students make effective use of ICT for research and for the rigorous re-drafting of their work.
296. The subject is very well led and managed and has resulted in good levels of improvement since the previous inspection. The head of department and the sixth form co-ordinator set a very strong and enthusiastic example. Teachers work together effectively to share and pool their strengths and to support the students. As the course expands – and new teachers are involved – there will be a need to enhance the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning. The systems for setting targets, tracking progress towards those targets and ensuring the students know their potential clearly and how to achieve it, are under-developed.

## French

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

### Strengths

- The highest attaining students achieve particularly impressively in speaking and writing.
- The quality of teaching is good, leading to good learning on the part of the students.
- Teachers know their students well and work hard with them.
- Students' attitudes to languages are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- When assessing a topic, teachers need to inform students more precisely how to improve their future work. Targets for improvement are currently too vague.
- The department should develop a more critical analysis of students' performance and use data more effectively to plan for improvement.
- There is a need to structure the non-taught hour of the course more tightly to ensure appropriate coverage of the syllabus.

297. Over the past three years, French results at A-level have fluctuated from being in line with the national average to below. Numbers have been small so that valid comparisons year on year are difficult. However, students have achieved satisfactorily in terms of their starting points on joining the course. In 2001, results were generally below average. At GCE A-level, all five students gained A-E grades and one student gained a B grade, and the average point score was slightly below the national average. AS-level results were below the national average; one student gained grade B and four students gained A-E grades. No student left the courses before taking the examinations.
298. The evidence from work seen during the inspection shows that standards are generally average. There is, however, a significant variation in attainment within Years 12 and 13 – from above average to below average. One student in Year 13 is attaining very highly: he speaks French fluently, uses complex and sophisticated language, can construct a well-argued case and produces accurate written work. His standard of written work is impressively high, exemplified by his critical analysis of Rimbaud's poem 'Le Dormeur du Val'; he describes how the poet moves from a description of a peaceful rural idyll where a soldier is lying on the grass to the shocking revelation that the soldier is dead. The language used is complex but the ideas are clearly conveyed. A lower attaining student learns the work carefully and achieves the average in listening, reading and writing but is below average in speaking.
299. In Year 12 the highest attaining students speak with some confidence, at length and with some fluency. The lower attaining students in Year 12 have an insecure grasp of the vocabulary of the topic, of the ideas and arguments, and have not yet made a full transition from the demands of GCSE to those of AS-level. Their level of speaking is below average. Generally, standards of pronunciation and intonation are average and at times above average. Responses are always understandable. Reading and listening skills are average or above. Students generally have appropriate research skills and use new technology well to access the Internet for information designed for French people. In both Years 12 and 13, students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
300. Teaching and learning overall are good. All lessons have clear aims. Teachers provide students with good strategies for success in reading and listening tasks, by encouraging skimming and scanning techniques and by listening for key phrases. Teachers work hard to prepare challenging tasks but also give good support to those students who find the task difficult. As classes in Years 12 and 13 have a wide ability range, teachers have good strategies for matching tasks to students' learning: they ask individualised questions, they give individual feedback on written and spoken tasks, they use group work in which higher attaining students can help lower attaining students and they use the initial teacher training student to give extra help to individuals or groups, under the supervision of the teacher. Pace of teaching and learning is usually brisk and there is skilful use of French throughout the lesson. All students use reference materials and dictionaries well. They also use their private study time appropriately and work well independently. During lessons, students are given pertinent feedback about their progress, but at the end of a topic feedback is not sufficiently precise to inform the students of specific ways to improve.
301. Students' attitudes to French are good. They focus well on the tasks and often convey enthusiasm for their work. The very good relationships between students and teachers make for a relaxed atmosphere, which is conducive to good learning. When



faced with a challenging task, students persevere and work through their difficulties as illustrated by a Year 12 lesson, where the students were reading the day's news from Le Figaro. They listen and learn from each other. They feel that they have had good guidance both on the course and concerning university courses and have received very good support from their teachers. They have enjoyed studying wide-ranging issues such as nuclear waste, racism and the wider aspects of culture but at times felt overwhelmed by the large amount of vocabulary.

302. The subject area has benefited from sound leadership and has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The department has produced many resources associated with the topics in the syllabus. It is now time to review which materials support the students' learning best, so that there is a coherent development of ideas and language within the topic areas. Teachers and students work very hard to minimise the cut in the teaching time to three hours per week. The college may need to structure the fourth hour more tightly to ensure that there is sufficient time to cover the syllabus in appropriate depth. The department has developed good strategies for analysing teaching styles and disseminating good practice; they need now to develop a critical analysis of available data on student performance and use it more effectively.