

INSPECTION REPORT

MONT SAYE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Rothwell

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122052

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Fennell

Reporting inspector: Mr Akram Khan OBE
27296

Dates of inspection: 24 - 28 September 2001

Inspection number: 192880

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| College category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 11-18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| College address: | Greening Road Rothwell Kettering Northants |
| Postcode: | NN14 6BB |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Brian Wilmer |
| Date of previous inspection: | 4 November 1996 |

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| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 27296 | Akram khan OBE | Registered inspector | | What sort of college is it? How high are standards? The college's results and achievements How well is the college led and managed? What the college should do to improve? |
| 14214 | Gillian Smith | Lay inspector | | How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Attendance How well does the college care for its pupils? How well does the college work in partnership with parents? |
| 10905 | Dr Alan Brewerton | Team inspector | Science | Sixth form inspection coordinator |
| 10448 | Michael Elson | Team inspector | Religious education | Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |
| 15918 | Margaret Goodchild | Team inspector | Art Equal opportunities Special educational needs | Accommodation |
| 18950 | Carmen Rodney | Team inspector | English English as additional language | Literacy across the curriculum |
| 24127 | James Kidd | Team inspector | History | How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| 13805 | Lynn Lowery | Team inspector | Design and technology | Staffing, accommodation and learning resources |
| 14446 | Barry Simmons | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| 2597 | Cheryl Jackson | Team inspector | Business education | |
| 28097 | Sheila Nolan | Team inspector | Mathematics | Assessment |
| 19404 | Les Schubeler | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | How well are pupils taught? |
| 27351 | Stuart Charlton | Team inspector | Information and communications technology | |
| 10787 | David Wright | Team inspector | Geography | |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Montsaye is a mixed comprehensive community college which became a specialist Language College in September 2000. With 1211 students on roll it is bigger than most secondary schools. There are significantly more boys than girls in Years 7-11. The college serves mainly Rothwell and Desborough and neighbouring villages. The number of students eligible for free college meals is broadly in line with the national average. Twelve pupils speak English as an additional language and 12 are 'Traveller Children'. The attainment of pupils when they join the college in Year 7 is average. There are 18.5 per cent of pupils on the college's register of special educational needs, which is similar to the national figure. Thirty-nine pupils have statements of special educational needs. This was a full inspection, which included an in-depth evaluation of the sixth form.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Montsaye is a good college. Students achieve high standards, particularly in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), thanks to the good teaching and positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils. The sixth form provision is good and cost effective. The headteacher and senior management team provide very effective leadership, which is well supported by parents, staff and the governing body. There is a strong commitment to maintaining and raising standards of education and the college's capacity to do so is considerable. The college provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- Standards are high in GCSE, particularly in science, design and technology, drama, geography, music and physical education.
- Highly effective leadership from the headteacher, senior management team and governors sets a clear direction for the college to enable pupils to achieve high standards.
- Teachers' high expectations and good teaching promote high standards.
- The educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Strong links with the community enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- There is a high standard of pastoral care for pupils within a supportive and caring environment and harmonious relationships at all levels.
- Provision for careers education is outstandingly good.

What could be improved

- Statutory curricular requirements in respect of religious education in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form.
- Standards achieved in GCSE English, mathematics, French and history; especially the attainment of boys in English, French, history.
- Students' performance in some A and AS-level examinations.
- Provision of information and communications technology in subjects.

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 maintained the many strengths identified in the November 1996 report, addressed satisfactorily all issues and considered other areas for development. Effective measures have been taken to raise standards and high standards have been sustained. Staff have a clear focus on raising standards of attainment of all pupils, based on improved systems for assessment and monitoring, although there are still inconsistencies across subjects in the way pupils' progress is evaluated and reported. The detailed analysis of performance data on entry and systematic monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress enable them to reach their potential in most of the GCSE examinations. Boys' attainment remains low in English, literature, French, German and history. The college's governors have received appropriate training in budget setting. Financial control is very good and there is effective and efficient management of finances and external grants.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | Key |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|------------------|---|
| | all colleges | | | similar colleges | |
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2000 | |
| GCSE examinations | B | A | B | B | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| A-levels/AS-levels | D | D | D | | |

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, in 2000, were below the national average in English and average in mathematics and science. In comparison with schools with similar socio-economic characteristics, pupils' performance was close to the national average in mathematics but well below average in English and below average in science. The trend in the college's average score for all core subjects was below the national trend. The provisional results for 2001 show significant improvement in the percentage of pupils reaching levels 5 and 6 in English and science. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C, in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 2000, was above the national average and at A*-G was close to the national average. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations was above the national average and the average for similar colleges. In 1999, the college achieved its best results, 60.7 per cent five or more A*-C grades which were well above the national average. Provisional GCSE results for 2001 show significant improvement over 2000, with 57 per cent of pupils gaining similar higher grades. Pupils have performed consistently very well in drama, design and technology and geography. In 2000, they achieved above average results in science, English literature, geography but achieved less well in French, German and dance. In English and German pupils' results have shown considerable variation; their performance in English was above the national average in 1999 but was close to the national average in 2000, whereas in German their performance was well above the national average in 1999 but well below in 2000. In 2001, pupils' performance improved significantly above the national average in science, art, business education, dance, German, geography and physical education but declined in English, mathematics, French, history and information technology. Results gained by the students who are entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent were below the national average in 2000. The 2001 provisional results, though still below the national average, show significant improvement.

These standards are matched by the quality of work seen during the inspection. Pupils in Years 7-9 make satisfactory progress and in Years 10-11 they make good progress. There were examples of high achievement in most subjects including science, art, drama, German, music, physical education and food technology. The progress of gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs is particularly good in relation to their prior attainment. The college sets realistic and challenging targets which are well founded on the detailed analysis of performance data and the regular monitoring of the progress of individual pupils. Targets for 2001 were exceeded by five per cent for pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C. Although realistic targets have been set for 2002 they could be more demanding.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Attitudes to the college | Good overall. Attitudes in the sixth form are very good. A minority of pupils are not motivated sufficiently. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good overall. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the college. The unacceptable behaviour of a few pupils adversely affects the work of others. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Pupils are given a good range of opportunities to take responsibility within the college. Relationships are good at all levels. |
| Attendance | Levels of attendance are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. |

Most pupils participate in the life of the college and willingly accept opportunities for responsibility. Appropriate ways of managing behaviour are being developed. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory but they are unsatisfactory when the provision is dull and unstimulating.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | 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.

High quality teaching makes a major contribution to effective learning and to the standards achieved. Lessons are well planned and are structured carefully to ensure effective learning. The quality of teaching is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Good teaching was seen in all other subjects. Teachers' expectations are high, helping pupils to acquire new knowledge quickly. In English pupils' individual progress is enhanced by constructive and helpful marking. In drama, art, music, geography, design and technology and physical education throughout the college, teachers adopt varied and interesting methods to promote learning. In Years 10 and 11, close attention to the GCSE requirements concentrates both teachers' and pupils' minds in a very positive way. The strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills are sound but these are not applied consistently across subjects. The teaching of information and communications technology is underdeveloped. Most pupils respond well to opportunities to write for different purposes and to improve their listening and speaking skills. Planning for pupils with special educational needs is good; they learn effectively in all subjects. Extra tasks are set for high attaining pupils, for example in science, English, geography and history, and they benefit from a wide range of out of college learning opportunities. Pupils collaborate very well in lessons but more encouragement is needed for pupils to work independently. Only six unsatisfactory lessons were seen and these contributed to unsatisfactory progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good in Years 7-9. Satisfactory in Years 10-11 and the sixth form. Statutory requirements are not met in respect of religious education in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good provision. There are very good procedures for the identification of pupils' special educational needs. Targets in individual educational plans are precise and assessment is systematic. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | The pupils who need additional support benefit from work in English and from subject teachers' careful attention to literacy skills. However, there are insufficient teaching and financial resources to help pupils at the early stage of learning English. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and moral, social education and cultural development are very good. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme contributes strongly to moral and social development. |
| How well the college cares for its pupils | The college provides a very safe environment and the quality of pastoral support is good. The college has good systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development. |

The college aims to provide a good range of learning opportunities to cater for the aptitudes of all pupils. In the sixth form the broad choice of courses includes A- and AS-levels, as well as a small number of vocational courses. The college has good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, and promoting attendance, behaviour and personal development. Pupils feel that they are valued as individuals and that teachers genuinely care about them.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The new headteacher, ably supported by the senior management team, staff and governors provide a highly effective and purposeful leadership. The leadership of SEN is effective and provision is managed very efficiently. Most middle managers provide good leadership of their areas. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors provide very good support to the college. They monitor and support effectively the departments assigned to them. |
| The college's evaluation of its performance | Very good: The senior and middle managers, governors and LEA officers monitor and evaluate systematically in most subjects. |
| The strategic use of resources | Efficient use is made of the college's existing resources. Valuable support is provided by non-teaching staff. |

There is a shared commitment to raising standards and providing high quality education. The senior management team and the college's governors have a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses and have the required capacity to make further improvements. The college's financial management and the way it approaches 'best value' are very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hard work expected from their children to achieve their best. Their children enjoy going to the college. The high quality of the teaching. Parents find staff approachable. The college helps their children to become mature, responsible and supportive of each other. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount and quality of homework. Range of after college activities. Closer partnership with the college. The behaviour of a few pupils. |

Parents are generally pleased with the college and the quality of education it provides. Inspectors support the positive views of parents. Inspectors found that homework is set according to a timetable and amounts are mostly reasonable. In some cases tasks set are not demanding enough for high attaining pupils. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and much appreciated by many pupils. At the time of inspection the behaviour of pupils in classes and around the college was good. The college works hard to keep parents informed about the progress of their children. Parents who attended the meeting with the registered inspector spoke highly of the arrangements for the induction of pupils in Year 7 but would welcome more information on sixth form courses. The new headteacher

is keen to strengthen relationships with parents, to enable pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities that are offered.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11-18 comprehensive college has 149 students and is expanding. There are significantly more girls than boys. It provides a wide range of subjects and vocational courses. Just over half of the students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. No students transfer to other schools although several pupils travel to nearby colleges for individual courses. Similarly, students from other colleges study some courses at this college. The GCSE examinations results are above the national average and so most students embark on two-year courses leading to AS-level, A-level and the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE).

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is mostly successful and cost effective. Students learn effectively. The sixth form caters well for students by providing a wide range of academic and vocational courses and the provision for personal development is good. Teaching in the sixth form is at least satisfactory in most subjects and is good in English, biology, design and technology, geography and history. Results in 2000 for A-level or AS-level equivalent were below average. Provisional results for 2001, although still below average, showed a significant improvement. Leadership and management are good and the sixth form provides good value for money.

Strengths

- the strategic use of resources, including specific grant and learning resources;
- the reflection of the college's aims and values in its work, including a commitment to equal opportunity;
- students receive good guidance in their choice of careers;
- leadership and management of the sixth form.

What could be improved

- the college does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education;
- examination results in some AS-level and A-level subjects;
- procedure for monitoring attendance;
- the provision of information and computer technology.

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 taught in the sixth form were inspected.

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|------------------|---|
| Art | Satisfactory. Results were above average in 2000. Provisional results in 2001 showed a decline at A-level and that girls outperformed boys. The AS-level course needs further development. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with good teaching at A-level. |
| Biology | Good. Results are above average, but average point scores are falling. Teaching is accurate and well organised and contributes to effective learning. |
| Business studies | Satisfactory. A-level and AVCE examination results in 2000 were below average but provisional in 2001 show an improvement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. |

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|-----------------|---|
| Chemistry | Satisfactory. Examination results in 2000 were well below average, but these improved slightly in 2001. AVCE science results were in line with national averages. Currently standards are satisfactory showing some further improvement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. |
| English | Good. Results in 2000 were above average. Teaching is good and promotes independent learning in which students undertake research and deliver well-prepared papers in seminars. |
| French | Unsatisfactory. Even though results were good in 2000 the entry was small. In 2001, provisional AS-level results were well below average and no students were entered for French A-level examinations. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. |
| Geography | Good. Examination results in 2000 were well below average. Results however improved in 2001 and were in line with national averages. Teaching and learning are good. Fieldwork activities are very good. |
| History | Good. Over the past three years results have been well below average. However, a new scheme of work which places greater emphasis on skills acquisition and essay techniques coupled with good teaching and learning are improving standards. |
| Mathematics | Satisfactory. Results at A-level are average and rising. However, students in Year 12 underachieved at AS-level. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory. |

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| How well students are guided and supported | Very good quality support and guidance are provided in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is good. Students are well informed about career options and about other opportunities beyond college. Students' progress is well monitored and they are provided with appropriate support. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | Leadership and management in the sixth form are good . Development planning is very good. Students' performance is monitored thoroughly and steps are taken to identify and overcome weaknesses. Governors play an effective role in leadership in the sixth form. |

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"> they are taught well and expected to work hard; teachers know them well and provide help when it is needed; they are encouraged to study and to do independent research; there are a good range of courses; they are treated as responsible young adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some students feel that they have insufficient time to become involved in extra-curricular activities; the learning environment for teaching and independent learning; information about progress relative to the subjects they are studying is not good enough; some students feel that they do not have good enough advice about careers. |

Students are positive about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered and the support they receive. The strengths identified are justified. Whilst the teaching program and the demands of examinations mean that free time during the college day is limited, there are many extra-curricular activities, which take place outside normal college hours, in which students could become involved. The facilities for teaching and independent study are well managed but are inadequate for the size of the college. Overall, the progress of students is well monitored by their teachers, but in several subject areas targets for improvement have yet to be established. The advice provided by teachers regarding careers and opportunities beyond college is very good.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall attainment on entry is average. Standardised reading, cognitive ability and National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, confirm this. An analysis of verbal scores indicates that Montsaye College has more pupils than expected in the average band and fewer pupils than expected in the above average and very high bands. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is low. In recent years the college's population has increased but the pupils' ability profile varies considerably in the present Years 7-9. The percentage of pupils on the college's register of special educational needs (SEN) has risen from 11.1 per cent in 1998 to 18.5 per cent in 2001. There are currently 39 pupils with statements of special educational needs. The pupils with the highest level of need have moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems; physical impairment or are autistic. The college has an inclusive ethos and is developing appropriate strategies to help all these pupils, many of whom receive extra help from class teachers and classroom assistants.
2. In 2000, by the end of Year 9 the attainment of pupils in the National Curriculum tests was below the national average in English and average in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils reaching higher level 6 was below the national average in English but close to the national average in mathematics and science. The trend in the college's average score for all core subjects was below the national trend. In comparison with similar schools pupils' performance was close to the national average in mathematics, well below average in English and below average in science. One of the contributory factors to relatively low performance in English is that there are significantly more boys than girls in Years 7-11 and boys' literacy skills on entry to the college are well below average. Over 40 per cent of the present Year 8 and 9 pupils read below their chronological age; one-quarter of Year 7 is performing well below average. The college is developing appropriate strategies to raise pupils' literacy skills. The provisional results for 2001 show significant improvement in the percentage of pupils reaching levels 5 and 6 in English and science. Girls, in line with national trends, outperformed boys in mathematics and science and did significantly better than boys in English.
3. By the time pupils are 16 years of age, the college makes good progress in consistently achieving its targets, which are for performance above the national average. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations was above the national average and at A*-G was close to the national average. Pupils' achievement in GCSE examinations was very good in comparison with schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. Provisional GCSE results for 2001 show a substantial improvement, with 57 per cent of pupils gaining similar higher grades. Girls, in line with national trends, outperformed boys, though the boys' results are above the national average. The value added analysis shows that the college adds good value to pupils' attainment in Years 10-11. Over the past four years, the GCSE results have varied; 51.5 per cent of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in 1998 compared with 57 per cent in 2001. In 1999, the college achieved its best results, with 60.7 per cent gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C. The trend in the college's averages was close to the national trend. The girls achieved better results than boys who outperformed girls in 1999. Provisional results for 2001 confirm national trends, with girls achieving 10 per cent more grades A*-C than boys.
4. Pupils have performed consistently very well in drama, home economics and geography. In 2000, they achieved above average results in science, English literature, geography but achieved less well in French, German and dance. In English pupils' results have shown considerable variation; their performance was above the national average in 1999 but was close to the national average in 2000. In 2001, pupils' performance improved significantly above the national average in science, art, business education, dance, German, geography and physical education but declined in English, mathematics, French, history and information technology. The attainment of girls was significantly better than that of boys in English, literature, art, business education, French, German, geography, history and music. Boys, however, performed better than girls in physical education and information technology.
5. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils in Years 7-9 make good progress and achieve above average standards in science, drama, design and technology, geography, music and religious

education. In the remaining subjects their achievement is in line with nationally expected levels. This represents an improvement in standards in English when compared with the college's 2000 results.

6. From the observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work, the majority of pupils are achieving standards in line with, and often above, national expectations but there are variations between subjects. At the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress and achieve standards well above the national expectations in drama, above average in art, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and dance and in other subjects the standard of pupils' work is in line with national expectations. In religious education pupils' attainment is well below expectation because of the shortage of time given to teaching.
7. Overall, the development of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The college now has a higher percentage of pupils with low literacy skills since the last inspection and planning is now taking place to ensure that there is a rigorous approach to developing literacy across the curriculum. Not all departments yet have a policy to demonstrate how they will concentrate on developing basic skills in their teaching. Oral skills are satisfactory in art and very good in science and history where attention is given to developing discussion skills. Although pupils take part in answering questions, their responses are brief and there is little encouragement for them to speak at length in most areas of the curriculum. Girls do not always take part in oral work and a significant number of boys are reluctant listeners especially in art. Oral skills are underdeveloped in modern foreign languages and religious education.
8. Pupils use specialist vocabulary as most subjects have displays linked to units of work. In music, pupils use rhyme to remember musical definitions and in Year 9 drama lessons, they can recall drama terms as they are encouraged to train their voice when shouting them out. In English, reading activities such as the Readathon, research library work, Year 7 timetabled library lessons and pupils' detailed book reviews, are used positively to encourage reading in Years 7-9. The library makes a good contribution to developing reading skills through the Year 7 induction programme and the well-stocked range of texts and audiocassettes to meet the varying needs of pupils. Good opportunities for pupils to read aloud are given in science and in modern foreign languages where they read a range of texts. Attention is given to writing skills in science and modern foreign languages, where grammatical features are taught routinely and pupils do extended writing including analytical reports and research work. Lower and some average attaining pupils do not write accurately and there are weaknesses in spelling and grammar. Most departments do not correct these weaknesses in the use of language. All departments need to focus on improving pupils' understanding and use of language across the curriculum and marking work in line with the Key Stage 3 strategy.
9. Pupils' standards of attainment in numeracy are satisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 have benefited from their experience of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools, and overall they show good facility in their calculations. One group showed confidence in dealing with factors and number sequences, while others were able to add and subtract efficiently using directed numbers. High attaining pupils in Year 9 worked well on number patterns to find generalisations. However, although pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not hampered in their work in other subject areas because of their numeracy skills, some still struggle with simple operations involving for example, powers of 10. Some find operations with fractions confusing, and even within the sixth form some students have little appreciation of topics such as long division. There is still a significant proportion of pupils who reach too readily for their calculators.
10. In design and technology, pupils experience a range of opportunities to develop their numeracy skills. They can measure accurately, and some calculate confidently quantities and costs in food technology. Other pupils practise drawing to scale and work competently on calculations on perimeters, areas and volumes in their design work and making CD cases. High attaining pupils use 3-D models in geography to represent physical situations. Pupils in Year 7 were able to link their understanding of co-ordinates with their map work. Pupils' graphical and statistical techniques support them well in their preparation for GCSE geography. Students in Years 12 and 13 were able to interpret graphical representations of the relationship between rainfall and river flow. Numeracy skills enhance the pupils' study in science. They are able to manipulate simple formulae to calculate their results. Counting skills are used well in music and pupils are able to recognise patterns in rhythms.
11. In information and communication technology (ICT), most pupils in Years 7-9 can log-on to the network and access appropriate applications. Most pupils can use word processors, spreadsheets and databases. They begin to access the Internet and e-mail but more work is needed in these areas to prepare pupils more adequately to undertake research information in

other subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have unsatisfactory opportunities to learn how to use ICT in other GCSE subjects. Whilst many of the applications in art, design and technology and modern foreign languages are good, they are largely as a result of the enthusiasm of individual teachers and pupils and do not universally cover the national requirements in ICT.

12. Pupils with SEN achieve good standards when their prior attainment is taken into account. Those with statements of special educational needs, who receive support in class and intensive support in the education support department, make good progress. In small group sessions led by support teachers, pupils make very good progress through work that is very well targeted to their learning needs. Pupils at the 'college action plus' stage of the special needs register make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Test results, for example, in reading and spelling, show good progress over time and there is a good level of consistency in the progress that pupils are making. The percentage of pupils gaining one or more A* - G grades is below that of colleges nationally and that of similar colleges. Evidence suggests that lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve at least one pass at GCSE. The performance of a few pupils is affected adversely by their unsatisfactory attendance.
13. The college has two pupils with English as an additional language at the early stage of learning English. The very small number who arrives with little, or no English do as well as can be expected as the college does not have the staffing or sufficient financial support to give the intensive support for pupils in the early stages of learning English. The induction programme ensures that pupils receive good support to familiarise them with basic skills before they join full lessons. Pupils who have no experience of speaking English receive intensive one-to-one support from the special needs coordinator who also works with them in some lessons. There is a sharp focus on developing basic literacy skills during these sessions. The local authority's multi-cultural support unit provides a small amount of support but overall the amount of support for early stage language learners is inadequate. The college ensures that if pupils have a short time in the college they leave with some GCSEs in subjects such as mathematics, science, expressive arts and design and technology.
14. The gifted, talented and more able pupils are only achieving national average standards though a few are achieving above. Some subjects are providing opportunities to extend such pupils. When opportunities are offered, they work hard, show keen interest and achieve well and produce some very good work. They frequently take initiative and readily work independently. Departments identify pupils who are gifted and talented and teachers in some subjects provide extension work to challenge and support them. In history, modern foreign languages and physical education, for example, high attaining pupils are set extension work and in music able musicians benefit from instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. Artwork by talented pupils is exhibited in local venues, and gifted Year 9 linguists have produced a newspaper in French or German based on press releases as part of a national competition. Pupils are given the opportunity to enrich their experience of mathematics through the Junior and Intermediate mathematics challenge. The 'Technology Challenge' allows Year 9 pupils to take part in an 'egg race' type competition and demonstrate their designing and making skills. There is a need to monitor, evaluate and promote further these positive developments, including raising parental expectations of their children's potential in order to maximise the achievement of able pupils.

Sixth form

15. At GCE advanced level in 2000, the pass rate was below the national average for all maintained colleges. The average point score per student achieved in 1999 and 2000, was significantly below the national average for students entered for two or more A-level subjects. Though still below the national average, the 2001 results show significant improvement in point scores - 15.4 in 2001 in comparison with 14.2 in Year 2000. A close scrutiny of A and AS-level results indicates that there are considerable variations across subjects over the last three years. Though the number of entries varies across subjects, students attained pass rates well above average in computer studies; above average in English, French, physics, biology and sociology; broadly in line with the national average in mathematics, history, design and technology; below average in business studies and well below average in geography, German, and chemistry. In terms of the achievement of grades A and B at A-level, the college was above average for all maintained colleges in English, art, sociology and design and technology, in line with the national average in computer studies but below in other subjects. Provisional results for 2001 show students attaining A and B grades above the national average in English, mathematics, German, biology, chemistry, design and technology,

sociology and psychology. In 2000, the number of students attaining A/B grades was below the national average in history, geography, business studies, German and chemistry. Girls' performance was better than boys in English and biology whilst boys achieved better results than girls in history and business studies. There were no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and design and technology. Provisional results for 2001 show above attainment in mathematics, geography, business studies, design and technology, sociology and psychology. The results also showed improved performance in biology and history with a significant rise in grades A and B. Results in chemistry, though below the national average, showed some improvement. In 2001, standards of attainment in the new AS examinations also show wide variations. In English, design and technology, German, geography, history, business education, physics, computer studies, sociology and psychology students' attainment was close to, or better than, the national averages but was below average in chemistry and French and disappointingly low in mathematics.

16. In the sixth form, standards achieved were judged to be in line with national expectations or better in 84 per cent of lessons observed. Above average standards of achievement were observed in four out of every ten cases. Most students make satisfactory progress. Students' levels of achievement, with the exception of mathematics, chemistry and French, are at least in line with their attainment in GCSE examination. The students' achievement in physics is consistent with their attainment in GCSE. Standards in English, biology, design and technology are above the national expectations; they are in line with national expectations in all other subjects except mathematics and French, where they are below.
17. Students achieve satisfactory standards through the curriculum in the key skills of language and numeracy. Most students speak clearly and use talk effectively in a range of settings. In a Year 12 sociology lesson, students spoke with real conviction on aspects of education history in England and Wales. In English, most students display a range of good discussion skills as they discuss, argue and defend their viewpoints. They evaluate each other's response and make perceptive comments partly to get a reaction as well as to debate their views. More generally, students are given insufficient opportunities to present their findings to their fellow students. Most students read fluently, accurately and with understanding. They write confidently in a range of styles and forms and their writing is well sustained and developed. Since the 1996 inspection the college has taken constructive steps to increase students' opportunities for research and independent study. This has had a positive result in some curriculum areas. In English and history, for example, students display a wide range of the skills needed to analyse texts or to analyse and interpret historical evidence. There is evidence, however, that in some subjects too few opportunities are presented for research, independent study, the practice of independent skills and the acquisition of the techniques of practical subjects.
18. Standards of mathematical skills are satisfactory. In mathematics lessons students exhibit these skills in the course of class work and homework exercises. Their competence to apply mathematical concepts to solve problems varies. Students' learning experiences are enriched through A-level mathematics challenge. Some high attaining students make rapid progress in matching graphs of functions with their gradient functions whilst some experience difficulty with the early stages of algebraic work. Evidence from across the curriculum shows students can interpret and use numerical and statistical data in a variety of forms. In A-level physics and chemistry they can solve problems involving simple equations.
19. In the sixth form, many students use word processing skills for the presentation of their essays and course work assignments and access the Internet to increase the breadth of their knowledge and understanding. All students in both the A-Level and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education programmes make good progress in their learning and demonstrate good ICT skills. There are isolated examples of very good applications of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. In art, ICT is well integrated within the curriculum and all students make very good use of ICT skills to experiment and enhance their work. Students in Years 12 and 13, need more opportunities to learn how to use ICT in other A and AS-level subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have positive and mature attitudes towards their work. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are closely related to the quality of teaching and the expectations of teachers. In the majority of lessons pupils are well motivated and keen to succeed in their work. They come to college in a positive frame of mind and are keen to benefit from the wide range of opportunities available. Pupils feel confident about asking their teacher for clarification when it is needed and this helps pupils to learn well and to

make good progress in their work. During lessons, pupils collaborate effectively in pairs or small groups to undertake science investigations or complete practical tasks in design and technology. For example, during a food technology lesson, Year 9 pupils helped their slower peers to bake and decorate cakes within the limited amount of time available. They form good relationships with their teachers and with other pupils.

21. Good relationships are evident throughout the college, among adults and pupils. Pupils are encouraged to show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds mix freely and all races and religions are respected and valued equally. Racial harmony is good and this is a testament to the college's very successful policy of social and educational inclusion. Pupils' positive attitudes to their work and to each other help to create a stable atmosphere within which the majority of them makes good progress.
22. Pupils with learning difficulties apply themselves well in lessons and often try hard. When pupils are supported in the education support department, they concentrate very well and try hard for the full hour session, showing a clear desire and commitment to improving their skills. They relate very well with support staff and there is also an obvious trust between pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and staff. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are almost invariably boys, behave inappropriately in some subject lessons and this has a direct impact on the progress that they make. At times, they disrupt the learning of others in the class. Other pupils generally show supportive and helpful attitudes to pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical difficulties.
23. Pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the college is good. They are helpful and polite towards visitors. The majority of pupils know exactly what is expected and the result is a lively but harmonious community. This college has a good atmosphere, which has a very positive impact upon pupils' learning. Members of staff set good examples of how to behave and the college pursues an effective policy of mixing high expectations with praise. Bullying does occasionally occur and pupils generally feel confident that such behaviour is dealt with firmly and very effectively. During lunch and break times, pupils use the library and make constructive use of the time by doing their homework or by using the computers. Some of the staircases and corridors are not wide enough and, in between lessons, they become very crowded. Although a few pupils are occasionally boisterous, the majority of them extend courtesies to others. Most pupils settle down quickly and undertake practical work sensibly and safely. A minority of pupils, however, does not behave well during lessons and can adversely affect the progress of their classmates. When in large groups, such as assemblies, pupils behave very well; they listen attentively and are courteous to both peers and adults. Instances of challenging behaviour are rare and the number of fixed period exclusions is very close to the national average.
24. The personal development of pupils is good. Different aspects of college life, especially the programme of personal, social and health education, enhance it. There is a well-established college council, which provides pupils in all year groups with good opportunities to take responsibility. Pupils think highly of the council and really appreciate being given a voice in the running of the college. Participation in work experience by Year 10 pupils raises the confidence and self-esteem of those involved. Exchange visits to France and Germany and residential visits, for example a GCSE geography field trip to the Peak District, enhance pupils' personal development and encourage them to use initiative and to become more independent. Pupils become mature in their thinking and discuss confidently their values and beliefs. Year 10 pupils, for example, considered thoughtfully and with great sensitivity the Catholic/Protestant divide in Northern Ireland. Pupils chaired the debate and were respectful of the opinions of their classmates. Pupils help to decide upon their personal and academic targets which gives them insight into what is required of them to improve their work.
25. Attendance has improved over the last year and the incidence of authorised and unauthorised absence is now very similar to the national average. This affects positively pupils' attainment and progress. A relatively small number of pupils, however, are taken out of college in order to go on family holidays. Several large employers have set weeks for their annual holiday and these tend to be either at the end of the summer term or at the start of the autumn term. These interruptions inevitably mean that the pupils concerned miss out on the work that is undertaken by the rest of the class and this could put them at a disadvantage in the future. Pupils are usually prompt in their arrival at college, although there are long-term problems regarding the reliability and punctuality of the college bus that brings pupils from Desborough.

Sixth form

26. Sixth form students have positive attitudes to their work and to college. This is reflected in the fact that over half the pupils from Year 11 stay on for the sixth form. As part of the inspection process, students were asked to complete a pre-inspection questionnaire. An analysis of their responses gives a positive picture. They are overwhelmingly positive about what the college proves for them, but they are also questioning constructively and seek improvement in provision. Almost every student who returned the questionnaire indicated that he/she enjoys this part of his/her education and would advise other students to join the sixth form in this college.
27. Students are hard working, mature, sensible and most are ready for the next stage of their education. The vast majority thinks that they are treated as responsible young adults. They undertake willingly the work that is asked of them and many use their initiative and do more. They are co-operative and relationships with each other and with members of staff are good. Students are keen to take on responsibilities around the college such as helping the younger pupils with their reading and helping to run clubs. As far as time permits, students undertake voluntary work within the local community and levels of participation rates in schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award are high.
28. Students' personal development is good. They are mature, confident and well motivated. They behave sensibly and can be relied upon to get on with their work both at home and at college. For example, in the absence of their teacher, a Year 12 group studying mathematics carried on working and volunteered to help each other whenever anyone was unsure of what to do.
29. Attendance is good. Year 12 students are expected to be present for registration at the start of each morning and afternoon session. These requirements are relaxed for Year 13 students who only have to be present for their lessons. While this is in keeping with their greater maturity, the system whereby they should sign in and out during the college day is not used reliably. This means that members of staff cannot be sure of exactly who is present at any one time, which could lead to confusion in the event of an emergency evacuation of the college.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Teaching is a strength and makes a good contribution to effective learning and to the standards achieved. The overall quality of teaching is good. It was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of 148 lessons seen in Years 7-11. It was good in 44 per cent and very good or excellent in a further 26 per cent of lessons. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection and supports the level of satisfaction expressed by parents prior to the inspection. Teachers have worked hard since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have received well-planned professional support to develop effective methods to improve the quality of teaching in all areas of the curriculum. In satisfactory lessons teaching promoted sound learning and in good or very good lessons teaching had a marked effect on pupils' attainment and progress. There was slightly greater proportion of better teaching in Years 10 and 11. As a result of this most pupils learn quickly and achieve above average standards in GCSE examinations. Excellent teaching observed on five occasions had a marked effect on pupils' attainment and progress. In Years 7-9, teaching and learning were good in all subjects except mathematics, art and modern foreign languages where overall standards were satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching was very good in music and drama; the enthusiasm of teachers enabled pupils to learn effectively and make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding. It was good in all other subjects except mathematics and modern foreign languages where overall standards were satisfactory. Only five (three per cent), ineffective lessons were seen, mostly in Years 7-9 where unsatisfactory teaching affected pupils' learning and as a result their progress was impeded.
31. The good subject knowledge of the teachers promotes positive attitudes and ensures that work is pitched appropriately at pupils at different levels. The planning of lessons is good in most subjects. Clear explanations of what pupils are going to learn are made at the start of lessons. Pupils, therefore, know what is expected of them. This is a particularly strong feature of the teaching in English, science, music, physical education and design and technology. The matching of work to pupils' various levels of attainment is a good feature of the planning in history. Planned provision for oral activities is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages

because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge of basic words and phrases.

32. High expectations of what pupils can achieve are reflected in the challenging tasks which teachers set their pupils. In English, pupils respond positively to demanding tasks which require lower attaining pupils to write and perform scripts based on the themes in "Macbeth". Demands are made on pupils to work hard and they respond appropriately.
33. When pupils with special educational needs are supported in lessons, the support is focused and those with learning difficulties make good progress. Educational support assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' progress. Teaching in withdrawal sessions is frequently very good. Work is carefully targeted to the needs of individual pupils and planning is thorough so that lessons proceed at a rapid pace. High expectations are conveyed to pupils and they, in turn, make good use of the time available by working hard and showing a high level of motivation. Teaching in subject lessons accommodates relatively well those pupils with special educational needs, although work is not always matched to different abilities. Teachers struggle in some classes where a number of pupils have learning difficulties and are not supported by learning assistants. For example, in English in Years 7-9, and where several pupils in a class have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teachers are not always firm enough, however, in dealing with pupils with behavioural difficulties and do not always employ strategies to prevent or diminish behavioural problems. They need more advice in dealing with these pupils.
34. Teachers have not yet received comprehensive training to equip them with the necessary skills to plan for pupils at the early stage of learning English as a second language. However, they focus on helping pupils to know and understand the basic subject vocabulary.
35. Good teaching methods provide opportunities for pupils to take an active part in lessons. This is a very good feature in music. In mathematics, a restricted range of methods holds up pupils' progress. In science, methods involving excessive copying from the board hinder the development of pupils' thinking skills, whereas in history there is an emphasis on making pupils reflect and think like historians.
36. Time and resources are well used in most lessons. There is good use of ICT facilities in English and design and technology where pupils develop a good range of skills. The recently acquired active whiteboard is well used in Spanish to present new expressions and to involve the pupils in active participation. Carefully selected resources stimulate pupils' imagination in English, and video clips are well used in history to illustrate different viewpoints. Although good opportunities for research involving use of the library and the Internet are provided in English, independence in learning needs further encouragement in most subjects.
37. The quality and use of ongoing assessment vary. In some lessons teachers make effective use of well judged questioning to probe understanding and use pupils' work to exemplify good standards. In a few weak lessons pupils' understanding was not secure because of lack of opportunities to discuss ideas in depth. Marking in many subjects is good and reinforces pupils' awareness of how well they are doing. The GCSE coursework assignments are marked thoroughly, often using examination criteria. In a minority of subjects, teachers do not define clearly enough what pupils must do in order to improve their performance.

Sixth form

38. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and promotes effective learning and standards achieved by students in most subjects. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of 48 lessons seen; it was good in 52 per cent and very good in a further 19 per cent. In one lesson the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.
39. Teachers have good subject knowledge and pass on their knowledge with confidence. Expectations of the students are generally high. In English, science and history lessons, students' knowledge, skills and understanding are well developed as they are required to reflect upon their views. Their capacity to argue a case is encouraged; perceptive questioning by teachers challenges students intellectually and obliges them to defend their opinions. The most successful teaching was challenging and lively; it posed questions, gave clear explanations, and achieved a good balance between firmly directing students in their learning and encouraging them to on their own initiative. A range of methods is used effectively to bring the subject alive, for example in English, history and geography but some of the teaching in mathematics and science is unimaginative, teacher-centred and fails to inspire the students.
40. Another good feature of the teaching in the sixth form is the detailed planning that gives lessons a clear focus, which is shared with the students and makes them aware of what is expected of them. The best lessons were conducted at a brisk pace and involved students actively in a range of varied tasks. These lessons offered good opportunities for students to ask questions, to challenge, to hypothesise and enter into discussion. Consequently students made good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. In most business education lessons, suitable tasks presented clearly enable students to make sufficient progress but the learning needs of middle and lower attaining students are not met fully. In mathematics, the planning does not take sufficient account of the knowledge, skills and understanding that students have previously demonstrated. Consequently, learning is not so effective. Resources are well chosen to match the needs of students, and effective use of information and communications technology facilities was made in Year 12 French lessons to help improve oral and comprehension skills.
41. Good management of time ensures that students are kept busy and work hard in science. Good procedures of assessment in most subjects enable students to have a clear understanding of the standard of their work and to be aware of what is required of them. Further development of such practices is needed in mathematics, French and business studies. The unsatisfactory lesson was characterised by a lack of variety, slow pace and inefficient use of time and resources.

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

42. The curriculum is always under review and the college works hard to provide routes for success for all its pupils. The various strands, academic, social and work-related, cater for the needs, aptitudes and interests of each individual, ensuring that everyone is included in what the college has to offer. Moreover, pupils are encouraged to treat their fellow human beings with dignity, irrespective of their ethnic group, gender, ability or religion. Assemblies seen during the inspection were planned with care, delivered with sensitivity and engaged all pupils in a most positive manner.
43. In Years 7-9, the college provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which fulfils its aims and meets the needs of all pupils. All subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, are taught. The college provides a range of worthwhile opportunities that meets the interest, aptitudes and particular needs of pupils. Drama, dance and music enhance pupils' opportunities in the performing arts. In Years 7 and 8, ICT is taught as a separate subject, and all pupils have the opportunity to study two languages, French and German, when they arrive at the college.
44. In Years 10 and 11, the college has taken full advantage of the increased flexibility in the National Curriculum to provide a wide range of courses that meets the needs and interests of all pupils. They follow a core of English, mathematics, double award science, design and technology, a modern language, a humanities subject and an expressive arts subject. In addition, they can choose one further option course and Spanish is available as a third

language. Nearly 17 per cent of pupils study two languages, which is slightly more than the college's target for 2001. Although aspects of religious education are taught, there is not enough curriculum time for this subject and the college does not meet the statutory requirements. Furthermore, the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement outlined in the programme of study.

45. The college has a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The educational support department provides an appropriate combination of in-class support and withdrawal sessions for individuals and small groups of pupils who are on the 'college action plus' stage of the special educational needs register (previous stages 1 and 2). Some at the 'college action' stage receive support in lessons. The education support staff work closely with the English department to support literacy development. Pupils' individual education plans have a very strong literacy focus and it is intended that pupils will have two major language acquisition targets, both closely linked to the National Literacy Strategy.
46. The college has also recognised the need for more radical alternative education for the less motivated pupils or those with a particular need to improve their basic skills. The college makes very good arrangements for a small number of pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11, through its Vocational Curriculum Project. This modification to the curriculum allows the pupils concerned to take GCSEs in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, to experience community service; to take part in conservation and to attend college 'taster' courses where they sample vocational courses chosen from two or three work-related courses that involve links with the local college and other agencies.
47. The college makes exceptionally good provision for pupils who are deemed to be at risk of exclusion or whose attendance is causing concern. These pupils are given the opportunity to attend regular work experience, to access further education college courses and to have mentoring. An individualised programme is developed for each pupil and this supported by careful planning via pupils' personal support plans and by clear targets. For example, a pupil may have the opportunity to work for GNVQs (General National Vocational Qualifications) in college, to undertake work experience for one day each week and to take some GCSEs at Montsaye. They also attend 'catch up', a support option, for which work is supplied to make up for GCSE sessions missed and to support coursework generally. The inclusion project enables a number of pupils to have access to what the college has to offer, to remain on the college roll and to be socially included, whilst extending opportunities to a full-time programme tailor made to their individual needs.
48. Good provision is made for pupils with physical difficulties and these pupils are well integrated. The college has close contacts with the Children's Training Unit at Kettering General Hospital. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists visit the college regularly to assess the physical needs of these pupils. They draw up special programmes of exercise to aid mobility and these are practised at the beginning of physical education lessons with support from a member of the education support team. An extra swimming lesson each week is also scheduled for these pupils.
49. Provision for Travellers is good and there are good links with the Traveller Service. Although these pupils' fragmented attendance impacts adversely on the progress that they make, some have completed successfully their education and passed examinations at GCSE.
50. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities and participation rates are high. Drama, art, dance, music and physical education make outstanding contributions. Most other subjects provide additional learning and recreational activities. Drama and music provide much appreciated classes and events while English has a planned extra-curricular programme that includes competitions and theatre visits. In addition to sport and games, which comprise inter-form competitions and matches against other colleges, there are many subject clubs, a variety of out-of-college visits organised by departments and an impressive residential experience in France for pupils in Year 8. The expressive arts department makes a significant contribution to enrich the cultural and aesthetic experiences of pupils through a drama production every two years and a yearly arts festival. In addition, an artist in residence gives pupils opportunities to practise their skills and pupils' musical interests are fostered by individual instrumental lessons, financed entirely by the governors. The modern languages department organises trips to Spain and also exchange visits to France and Germany.

51. Aspects of personal development, sex education and health education, including education on drug misuse, education for citizenship and environmental education, are taught through a well-planned PSHE programme which is designed to widen pupils' aspirations. It comprises modules of work in all years incorporating a wide variety of moral and social issues. Pupils discuss issues in relation to confidence and responsibility, relationships and difference, health education, sex education, drugs awareness, careers and citizenship. The college encourages pupils to express their opinions about the content of the programme, to organise and deliver form assemblies, and it also provides them with opportunities to take part in decision-making about college guidelines. The discussions on racism, prejudice and bullying are key elements of the PSHE sessions and the underlying message of the entire programme is care and consideration for all.
52. The provision for careers education and guidance is outstandingly good and is delivered weekly during PSHE lessons. The college received the prestigious Career Mark award from Career Path (Northamptonshire) for the second time in 2001. There is a careers coordinator in post and the programme is designed to prepare pupils for adult life by encouraging a positive attitude to employment and by equipping pupils with the relevant knowledge and understanding which will help them to make a choice of occupation or of further study. Careers advisers visit the college every week and they talk to individual pupils on a regular basis. The course begins in Year 7, when pupils research different kinds of jobs and arrange for visitors to come into class and talk about the posts they hold. In Year 8, the college introduces pupils to computer programmes relevant to careers such as Kudos. Year 9 pupils revisit Kudos and use the well-stocked careers library for further research into varieties of employment. Work experience takes place in Year 10 and the college places great emphasis on preparing its charges effectively for the two-week placement. In Year 11, the careers advisers play a key role in supporting pupils when they are applying for jobs and members of the college's senior management team interview all pupils who applying to enter the sixth form.
53. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. For example, the Kettering Employer Education Partnership (KEEP) sponsors the careers convention which is held every two years. The conventions are always well supported, with over 3000 visitors last year. KEEP also organises events for pupils, when they can visit local businesses to gain an insight into the world of work. Recently, the partnership has arranged for teacher business placements and also for business managers to visit the college.
54. The college has very impressive curricular links with partner schools and colleges. Primary-secondary liaison, designed to ease transfer to the college for its new pupils, is a particular strength and demonstrates the emphasis placed by the college on care for individuals' welfare, both academic and social. There are regular meetings with the headteachers of local primary schools, an open day and an open evening for Year 6 parents and pupils. The college organises an arts festival for Year 5 youngsters. In order to get an accurate picture of the needs of their new pupils, teachers visit all primary schools sending Year 6 pupils to the college. Curriculum continuity is seen as vital to the future success of those new to the college and, to this end, teachers from the art department display GCSE project work in the primary schools and the languages department organises the teaching of French in each primary school once per week.
55. Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Since the last inspection, provision for cultural development has improved considerably and is now very good. Provision for moral and social development is very good but for spiritual development is still barely satisfactory. The college's awareness of these dimensions of pupils' personal development is shown in its documentation on collective worship, equal opportunities and pastoral policy. Steps have been taken to involve the whole college and to improve co-ordination but provision for spiritual development needs more planning, monitoring and evaluation.
56. The college is very good at promoting the principles that distinguish right from wrong. There is a framework of moral values that regulates pupils' behaviour and reinforces positive attitudes. Pupils understand the college's rewards and sanctions and regard them as fair. An incident that occurred during form time illustrated good tutorial practice. An example of offensive graffiti was found, believed to have been done by a pupil in the form but absent. The opportunity to consider the moral implications and how to put the matter right was taken by the pupils under the guidance of the tutor. This confirmed evidence that the pastoral system is

strong and that pupils are surrounded by good adult role models in the college. On occasions teachers were heard shouting at pupils but such occasions were rare.

57. The college provides very well for pupils' social development. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and encourage mature behaviour and self-discipline. In most subjects there are opportunities for pupils to show initiative and independence and to work collaboratively in pairs and in groups. The recently revised programme of personal and social education covers a range of appropriate topics including citizenship. Issues such as bullying, homelessness and racism are studied in English through the use of literary texts. In drama pupils explore family relationships and rites of passage and learn about group dynamics. The college council is regarded by pupils as important and effective.
58. The college's contribution to pupils' cultural development is now very good. That the college has made a substantial improvement is evident immediately from the stimulating visual displays on the walls of the corridors. These show the wide range of extra-curricular activities and residential opportunities enjoyed by pupils. The books in the library have been chosen to show the world and the cultural diversity of its people. In religious education pupils study not only Christianity but also Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Provision for the European dimension has been enhanced by Community Language College status. Art, dance, drama and music combine in the expressive arts department to give emphasis to other cultures, such as African and Indian. Opportunities to experience and appreciate cultural diversity is a feature of the schemes of work in most subjects but not in mathematics.
59. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The weekly assembly is very good and collective worship comes through the opportunity for reflection at the end. On the other four days there is no similar opportunity in tutorial time despite the Thought for the Day programme. Form tutors do not know how to do it. In religious education pupils are enabled to learn about themselves and life from their study of religious belief and practice, but there is not enough time in Years 10 and 11 and no time in the sixth form. English is good at developing pupils' spiritual awareness through personal and creative writing but in other subjects opportunities are missed. Despite encouragement to include the spiritual dimension in schemes of work considerable inconsistency remains.

Sixth form

60. The sixth form curriculum comprises a broad range of subjects, including sixteen GCE A-levels and a number of vocational courses at both GNVQ and AVCE level but it does not meet the statutory requirement for the teaching of religious education. Students entering the sixth form are expected to have attained appropriate qualifications at GCSE level, but there are inconsistencies in the application of this requirement, in mathematics for example. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but, because of the high dropout rate from Year 12 to Year 13, the relatively low take-up of vocational courses and the fact that only 50 per cent of students go on to higher education, the review of the sixth form curriculum is timely. The college is in the process of modifications to its curriculum and the entry requirements.
61. The college places great emphasis on informing Year 11 pupils about the sixth form and in preparing them for entry. Pupils are introduced to the essentials of sixth form study as part of the careers programme. There is also an information evening to which both pupils and parents are invited. In addition, a member of the senior management team interviews every prospective sixth form student, when the benefits and responsibilities of sixth form study are discussed and when pupils are also given advice on possible career paths and higher-education opportunities. Subject departments have spent considerable time developing, writing and reviewing course outlines and schemes of work in order to reflect the new national requirements.
62. Over half of Year 11 pupils choose to join the sixth form, but recently the dropout rate has been high. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all students, their learning needs and their future career plans. Each option is delivered in nine hours per fortnight and there are opportunities to follow an enrichment programme and also key skills sessions. There are AVCE and GNVQ courses available, but the take up is low, particularly of Intermediate GNVQ, and the advanced level and AVCE courses do not meet the needs of those students wishing to follow business education programmes.
63. There is a substantial programme of enrichment courses built in to tutor time and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is a strong feature of sixth form life. Students take part in a Young

Enterprise scheme and also attended the European Youth Conference in Greece. They take part in local business simulation games, designed to help them meet deadlines and they enter the Rotary speaking competition regularly. Many students participate in dramatic, musical and artistic activities and their personal development is fostered when they provide support for younger pupils in lessons and when they assist with paired reading.

64. The college recognises that the provision for students' progress in key skills is an area for development. A key skills coordinator is now in place and has delivered in-service training to relevant staff. Twelve students completed key skills programmes last year, but the college is now targeting students with low GCSE grades in core subjects with an emphasis on ICT. One hour per week is given over to GCSE retakes in English and mathematics and also to the three main key skills of numeracy, communication and ICT.
65. In the sixth form, provision for students' moral, social and cultural development continues to be very good. Tutorial provision is strong. During the inspection students were working on their UCAS forms and were seen to receive very good personal support and supervision. The programme of personal and social education provides a variety of experiences and this is complemented by a range of extra-curricular opportunities. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme continues into the sixth form and is only one of a number of enrichment activities available. Opportunities exist for students to do voluntary service. Within the college students can help pupils with special educational needs or assist in subject areas, such as history, if they have a specific interest.
66. Provision for students' spiritual development is in need of improvement. The absence of religious education, the only subject required by law in the sixth form, was noted in the last report and remains an obvious gap. Daily acts of collective worship are not held and no equivalent arrangement to develop spiritual awareness is in place. The college expects that the spiritual development will happen informally, which to some extent it does. But, as in the main college, there is lack of planning, monitoring and evaluation. The expertise developed in the provision of the social, moral and now cultural aspects needs to be extended into the equally important but more difficult spiritual dimension. The expertise shown in religious education by which younger pupils learn about themselves from their study of religious belief and practice is still relevant in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

67. The provision for the welfare of pupils is good. It is underpinned by an effective pastoral system that ensures that a tutor knows each pupil well. Staff know the pupils well and consequently the pupils feel supported by the college. Relationships between pupils and members of staff are good and this helps to ensure that any emerging problems are identified and addressed at an early stage. The pastoral system works well and heads of year liaise very closely with each other and with their individual form tutors. Their work is very well supported by the senior management team and by a conscientious and dedicated education welfare officer. There are very good links with contributory schools and this helps pupils to settle down quickly once they arrive in Year 7. Child protection procedures are very good and statutory requirements are met in full. This college is a safe place to be and health and safety procedures are good.
68. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good and this helps to ensure that pupils are able to work to the best of their ability and to achieve well. Pupils with personal or academic problems are particularly well supported. When the need arises, members of staff are able to refer individual pupils to the college counsellor and this guidance is complemented by weekly 'drop in' sessions that are provided by the college nurse. The overall standard of care provided by this college is high and makes a significant contribution to pupils' welfare by providing constructive and very well informed support. As well as these established procedures, the college is piloting a scheme whereby a group of underachieving pupils are identified at the end of Year 7 and are monitored closely throughout Year 8. Indications are that this intervention is helping these pupils to achieve their potential and this scheme is due to be repeated in the near future.
69. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Year teams remain constant throughout pupils' time at college and this continuity helps to ensure that members of staff get to know their pupils very well. The form tutor works closely with the head of year and there are very good links with other members of staff such as the special needs

co-ordinator. The tracking of pupils' attainment by the college, and systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress, are satisfactory.

70. Procedures for promoting behaviour are good. Members of staff usually provide good examples of how to behave and expectations are high. Pupils have a very good idea of what is, and what is not, acceptable and they say that bullying is rare. Procedures to deal with bullying are very effective and parents and pupils are confident that such behaviour is dealt with firmly. Should a pupil behave inappropriately, or be late to class, they may be placed on report or given a lunchtime detention. This system is very flexible and is organised to suit the individual misdemeanour.
71. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good and rates of attendance over the last year have improved significantly. Teachers log attendance at the start of every session using an electronic registration system. This ensures that the college is able to monitor individual attendance closely and emerging trends are quickly identified. The college has recently started to contact parents on the first day of each unexplained absence and there is very good liaison with external support agencies. Any pupil whose attendance gives cause for concern is reported to the relevant head of year who holds weekly meetings with the college's education welfare officer. This liaison is very effective and is backed by a variety of effective incentive schemes. These include the award of certificates for outstandingly good and much improved attendance.
72. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. The college has a very productive relationship with a range of external specialists. There is high quality dialogue between the special educational needs co-ordinator and visitors such as educational psychologists, who work closely with the college. A number of external specialists are involved appropriately in the assessment and support of pupils with special educational needs. Specialists, such as those for pupils with visual impairment or hearing impairment, visit the college regularly. A counsellor is available in college for pupils who need emotional support. The college provides very good support in Years 10 and 11 for pupils who are at risk of exclusion or whose attendance is poor, and this is set out in their pastoral support plans.
73. The college has very effective systems for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs. Initially, cognitive ability tests are used to screen for potential learning difficulties. Assessment is particularly thorough in identifying literacy difficulties. The English department administers spelling tests for all pupils in Year 7. Those falling 18 months or more below their chronological age, or identified as causing concern, are assessed further through a number of reading tests that identify the particular nature of their difficulties. Some assessments include appropriate specific links to the National Literacy Strategy. Assessment to diagnose learning difficulties in mathematics is effective and the department pays good attention to the development of basic numeracy skills for pupils with special educational needs. Clear diagnosis is evident in activities, such as sequencing, provided in the education support department. Statutory requirements for annual reviews and statements of special educational needs are fully met.
74. Whole college procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. There are efficient systems to record appropriate information on pupils' attainment when they enter the college and at the end of Years 9 and 11. This information is well supplemented with assessment data from subject areas at three key points in the year. The data is used effectively by tutors, heads of year and teachers to track pupils' progress and identify any underachievement. Form tutors are central to the academic monitoring system and most tutors focus well on their pupils' achievements.
75. The college's assessment policy provides clear guidance to departments on formulating their own assessment and practice. There are good examples in subjects such as science, design and technology, English and physical education. Individual guidance for pupils, as well as involvement in their own assessment, is very good in design and technology. Science teachers keep careful records of pupils' attainment in tests and modules, setting and comparing target grades and results. Within physical education, pupils are very clear as to what they must do to improve, and in English, there are regular reviews and target setting. However, this good practice is not consistent across all subjects of the curriculum, as for example in mathematics.
76. Since the last inspection, the college has made good progress in developing its practice in formative marking. Pupils are given much clearer guidance on how to make progress.

Sixth form

Assessment

77. Overall, the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The college has reviewed and refined its assessment processes so that students in the sixth form benefit from more frequent support and monitoring than in the main college. The college has comprehensive information on individual students' earlier achievements. These are used efficiently to set potential targets for attainment grades at the end of the sixth form.
78. Most students receive regular advice and guidance from their subject teachers. The head of year and form tutors monitor their students' progress at key points throughout the year. However, they are dependent on subject teachers accurately diagnosing individual student's learning needs. Not all areas of the curriculum always detect successfully students' difficulties and needs. As a result, retention rates in some areas are poor, as for example, in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
79. Marking in many areas is developmental and formative. Teachers in English prepare students well at the start of the AS-level course. In history, marking is of high quality and students' work is fully annotated with formative guidance. Most students are positive about the guidance they receive from their tutors and teachers and feel that they are clear as to how they can improve their work.

Advice, support and guidance

80. This college provides highly effective guidance and support for sixth form students from the time they start in Year 12 until they leave college. During Year 12, students are supervised fairly closely but this tapers off and students are granted more autonomy as they move into Year 13. These students are allowed to work at home in between lessons and only have to come in when they have a lesson or tutorial. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and feel well supported. Almost nine out of ten of the students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that the range of courses suits their talents and career aspirations well. They also feel that teachers are very encouraging and are very willing to help them if they have difficulties with their work.
81. The advice and support on future careers and entry to higher education are very impressive feature of the care shown by the college to its students. Students are encouraged to prepare personal references, practise writing letters of application and completing a personal achievement log. There is a careers board which includes job vacancies and the college invites local training providers to give presentations to students. There is a higher education evening and also an evening when student finance is discussed. Prospective medical students and also those applying for entry to Oxford and Cambridge benefit from practice interviews. The head of the sixth form leads a cohesive and committed team very effectively indeed.
82. Health and safety procedures are good although the day-to-day system whereby sixth form students sign in and out during the college day is not used sufficiently rigorously.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

83. This college places great emphasis on working closely with parents and sees a close partnership as fundamental to its drive to raise standards. Links with parents are good and the majority of parents support their children in their studies. Attendance at consultation evenings is good and almost all of those concerned attend their child's annual review. This dialogue helps to involve parents in their children's education and plays an important part in encouraging the pupils to succeed and to achieve a good standard of work.
84. The college has a very detailed and well-presented prospectus, which is parent friendly and gives parents full information about the organisation of the college and the college ethos. In addition, separate booklets are provided for post-16 students and for parents of Year 7 pupils prior to their entry to the college. Parents receive copies of the college newspaper 'The Flame' which helps to keep parents involved with the day-to-day life of the college and the work their children are doing. The parent teacher association organises social and fundraising events during the college year and these help to raise funds that are used to improve the range and

quality of learning resources available. The drive on improving attendance means that parents are kept very well informed about their child's attendance and the college is scrupulous in following up each and every unexplained absence. The college has invited the parents of pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7 to meetings that deal with various areas of the curriculum such as science, mathematics and languages but these meetings have not been well attended.

85. Transition arrangements for new pupils are good. Prospective pupils attend a "taster" session prior to their selection of the college. After selection, parents of new pupils are invited to come to the college, prior to their admission, to meet their group tutors, year tutors and discuss any items of concern that they may have. The parents are able to approach the headteacher, senior management team and staff at all times to discuss their children's progress and are contacted directly by group tutors if they feel there are issues of concern that they wish to discuss regarding pupils' progress.
86. The education support department maintains good relationships with parents and involves them appropriately in decisions about their children's education. Good liaison with parents of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties involves them in reviewing behaviour targets and in a home-based rewards system.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

87. The leadership of the new head, who has been in post since January 2001, is a real strength for the college. She brings determination, openness and fairness in her dealings with staff and pupils. She has provided a clear educational vision, shared with the entire teaching staff, governors and parents. The vision statement sets expectations of 'a high quality curriculum, aiming for excellence with an emphasis on quality teaching and learning.' She enjoys the full trust of governors, senior managers and staff who commented that the new management style is very supportive of their work. Many of the ambitious aims outlined in the document are supported by a wide range of new initiatives including:-
- wide consultation and audit of strengths and weaknesses to define clear priorities and achieve consistency;
 - review of the strategic direction of the college and its aims, with a focus on raising achievement and improving teaching and learning;
 - introduction of a three-year strategic plan for improvement;
 - reorganising staffing structures and redefining the roles of the senior management team;
 - regenerating enthusiasm and opportunity in the staffing structure;
 - more rigorous monitoring and evaluation activities, promoting individual and team evaluation and training;
 - revised format of headteacher's report to governors, highlighting achievements, staff and professional development, the curricular opportunities, external links, the environment and finance.
88. After wide consultation with governors and staff, clear line management responsibilities have been assigned to senior and middle managers. The senior management team, consisting of the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers and the director of non-teaching services, has complementary skills and experience, forming a cohesive and effective team. The senior management team is trusted to challenge and support staff in raising standards by helping faculties to evaluate themselves, by identifying their developmental needs and by supporting college improvement via curriculum, management and staff development. The senior management team works hard to involve staff and governors in decision-making, consultations, planning and review. There are well-planned meetings of the senior management team, the policy and planning groups. The college spends considerable time and effort in analysing public examination results to evaluate the comparative performance of subjects. Monitoring and support are generally good overall but the challenge offered to most faculties has been insufficient.
89. The college is committed to continuous improvement, as is evident from the clear policies and procedures it has established. This commitment is articulated through a strategic management plan for 2001-2004. The plan was agreed by staff and governors after an appropriate audit of the curriculum; information on performance indicators, reports from the headteacher and staff and a broad oversight of quality. The plan has many good features, such as clearly defined priorities, tasks, responsible staff, success criteria and strategies for monitoring and evaluation. The plan aims to raise achievement and increase value added contribution for all students but it lacks precise measurable targets. Appropriate priorities and tasks focus sharply on

standards, teaching, learning, management and learning resources. The impetus for improvement in standards is provided through detailed scrutiny of performance data, benchmarking, standardised reading scores and pupils' attainments in the National Curriculum tests which are used to determine the relative performance of subjects. Managers and staff are generally aware of the priorities and targets, which apply to their subjects. Departmental plans have many good features but need strengthening to include specific quantifiable targets to determine value-added achievements in the subjects.

90. The college is developing effective strategies to carry out self-reviews using a range of performance measures. All members of the senior management team participate with staff in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, standards and aspects of other provision. Reviews of standards in individual departments are particularly well organised. All heads of department observe their colleagues teaching and they report to their line managers. External evaluation and support by the LEA's advisory service have played an important part in raising standards. The mathematics, science and special needs departments have completed a thorough evaluation of teaching and learning and this is being extended to other departments. A climate of critical scrutiny and mutual trust has been established and there is a climate of openness in which achievements are celebrated and areas for improvement readily acknowledged.
91. Overall, heads of departments provide good professional leadership but the quality of leadership and effectiveness varies. Some subjects for example, English, science, design and technology, geography and expressive arts, are well organised and curricular planning is good. They have been effective in generating ideas, enthusiasm and support for staff. The best departments are beginning to scrutinise pupils' work and analyse public examination results. In some subjects, issues identified in the November 1996 OFSTED report have been tackled effectively. In others, some significant weaknesses persist. Boys' attainment remains low in English, literature, French, German and history. More generally, there are inconsistent approaches to homework, marking and assessment. Subject plans do not focus on value added improvement at the end of all key stages. The pastoral team is very effective in providing good support and care. There is continuous whole-college involvement in the development of a more consistently applied code of behaviour focusing on the rewards systems. Pupils' attendance rates have improved and are now in line with the national average. Staff and pupils alike are aware of the increasing expectation of academic success.
92. The special needs coordinator provides effective leadership and the learning support department is very well managed. Effective and efficient procedures are in place to manage provision for pupils with special educational needs. The departmental development plan is a good document that incorporates the recommendations of the LEA's review of special educational needs provision, revealing a thorough approach to development and evaluation. The college has already taken account of the imminent revisions to the Code of Practice for special educational needs by merging the former stages 1 and 2 of the special needs register as 'college action' and stages 3 to 5 as 'college action plus'. This is an example of the special educational needs co-ordinator's commitment to developing and continually improving the college's support systems.
93. There are good monitoring arrangements for pupils with statements and those at the 'college action plus' stage, via regular input from support teachers and external specialists. However, the progress of pupils at the 'college action' stage is dependent on observations made in passing by educational support assistants, by subject teachers or heads of year. The special educational needs co-ordinator does not monitor the provision that is made for them or the progress that they are making. This is an important omission and there is a need for the co-ordinator to become much more involved in monitoring the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs across the college. The need to monitor external placements for pupils on the inclusion project has already been identified, rightly, as an area for development.
94. The governor designated with responsibility for special educational needs visits regularly the college and relays effectively information on provision to the governing body as a whole, raising governors' awareness of special needs issues. Another governor has also made visits to the college and supported the education support department. Governors raise any concerns communicated to them by parents and monitor special educational needs provision in so far as they are involved in financial decisions and in the process of college development planning. There is scope, however, for governors to fulfil a closer monitoring role with the education support department and this has been identified by the co-ordinator, who has clear and constructive ideas on how it might be achieved.

95. The governing body supports the college well. Governors bring a wide range of skills and experience. Financial skills are particularly well represented. At the time of the last inspection, weaknesses were noted in respect of governors monitoring and value for money accountabilities. A group led by the chair of governors coordinates and reviews the work of the governing body. The governing body now plays an active role in strategic planning, critical support and monitoring and evaluation. Positive relationships and mutual trust exist between the governing body and the senior management team. A number of governors are involved in working groups for a variety of developments such as assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress and attainment and the Careermark initiative. Formal links with subject managers are well established and enable governors to develop a good understanding of the college. The governing body does not ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement curriculum in religious education.
96. Procedures for financial management and control are effective and efficient. The college's governors exercise responsible oversight of the college's income and expenditure and this is reflected in the work of the finance committee. They are actively involved in scrutinising and agreeing the budget allocations. Well supported by the director of non-teaching services, they have managed competently and applied most effectively the principles of compare, challenge, consult and compete to ensure good value for money. The college carries forward only a small balance from year to year and spends its resources prudently. The government grants for the specialist language college, National Grid for Learning, and Standard Funds are managed efficiently, ensuring that resources are used as planned and that value for money is obtained. It is also using Standards Fund money for inclusion very effectively and creatively. The college has restructured the site and administration teams to improve efficiency. The administrative support from the office staff is skilful and efficient.
97. Financial control is very good and plays a major part in making sure that resources are used as planned. There are effective arrangements for ordering and checking purchases. Departmental bidding for annual funding is well managed. The allocation of funds to departments is open, fair and equitable. An effective vetting procedure at senior management level for departmental plans and requests for funding, ensure that judgements on the use of resources are soundly based. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately and resources are targeted appropriately to support the teaching and learning of these pupils. The college is beginning to target resources to improve standards in some weak subjects but has not assessed the impact of additional investment in ICT and learning support assistants. The college accounts are audited regularly. The recent audit report commented favourably, "Overall the systems at Montsaye College are being maintained to a high standard" and the college was complimented on "Good control over the college budget." The report has been presented to the governing body and the two recommendations contained in the report have been acted on.
98. The college has sufficient well-qualified staff. They are deployed satisfactorily to meet the needs of the National Curriculum and support the learning of pupils. The match of staffing levels, qualifications and experience to subject taught is good across the college. There is a weakness in religious education, where staffing the curriculum currently being taught is causing difficulties. In food technology and science, there is inadequate technical support and this puts unnecessary strain on the specialist teachers. The college has found it difficult to recruit a permanent specialist design and technology teacher this year. Language College status has enabled the college to benefit from extra language assistants and a technician.
99. Staffing arrangements for special educational needs are good overall. The department is short of one educational support assistant at present and this is having some impact on the level of support in the classroom; inspectors noted occasions when more support might have been beneficial. Timetabling arrangements are suitably flexible so that education support staff are able to respond, as far as possible, to needs as they arise. Newly appointed educational support assistants work closely with an experienced colleague as an introduction to their role. Subsequently, they have access to an appropriate range of professional development opportunities. Support teachers have a good level of expertise and make very good use of external expertise.
100. Staff development is seen as a high priority. The college was awarded Investors in People status in 1997 and was successfully re-credited in 2000. In-service training is well managed and is linked closely to performance management. There are clear, well-documented and highly effective induction programmes for the four newly qualified teachers and the graduate

trainee teacher. They are provided with good support at both departmental and college levels. They are offered good support by mentors, their colleagues within their subject departments and the local authority. All teachers receive induction and newly qualified teachers are offered the support of mentors. Staff interviewed found the induction to be useful. Professional development days are well planned and have a focus, which relates to the priorities identified in the college development plan. Departments base their training needs on their own departmental priorities and individual members of staff have the chance to identify and benefit from appropriate training linked to performance management. There are effective procedures in place to enable the college to monitor the impact of any training undertaken. Overall, the whole system is efficient and effective.

101. Overall, accommodation is good, but within it, there are strengths and weaknesses. The college has benefited from Specialist Language College status. Consequently the recently built language block provides excellent facilities for learning. All rooms benefit from sound systems, videos and televisions. Pupils say that it has made them much more interested in learning languages and motivation has improved. Outdoor facilities for the teaching of physical education are good and good use is made of the on-site swimming pool. Inadequate indoor facilities, however, hinder learning in physical education. The English department is enjoying new rooms with a high standard of décor and provision for extensive display. However, there is inadequate provision for the number of pupils studying drama. The lighting in the specialist drama studio is incomplete and the second area used for drama is unsatisfactory. The rooms used for food technology are unsatisfactory. They are very old, outdated and difficult to keep clean. The message they give to pupils about the subject is poor, despite the best efforts of the teachers to provide high quality displays. Textiles rooms have limited storage space and do not have proper sinks for work with dyes etc. Overall, the outward appearance of the technology block is shabby and it creates a bad impression as people enter the college site. Music rooms are small and restrict the range of teaching styles that can be used to make the subject interesting. Corridors are too narrow for the number of pupils using them and congestion is a real problem. The quality of display around the college is good and helps to create a stimulating learning environment.
102. In most subjects, there is a good range of learning resources available. Resources for modern foreign languages are excellent and pupils benefit from easy access to information technology facilities. In English, there is a good range of GCSE textbooks, but the department does not have enough textbooks to support the new Key Stage 3 strategy. The music department benefits from a good range of musical instruments, but the computers are not capable of running the appropriate software and this causes difficulties. A lot of the equipment in the food technology rooms is very old and worn out. This causes problems as it does not work efficiently and pupils struggle to complete their work in the time available. The cookers are generally old or of a very basic design and as well as contributing to the poor image, they are not as efficient or as reliable as they should be.
103. The library is an attractive area for study. It has an interesting arrangement of shelving and the private study area for the sixth form students is supervised easily. It contains a good selection of books and teachers promote its regular use. Students make excellent use of the six computers in the library. They are an asset to the support of teaching and learning. A full-time qualified and experienced librarian provides excellent support to teachers and pupils. The current library stock has been reviewed and extended; the library supports good opportunities for reading and research.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

104. The sixth form is well led, managed and administered. Roles, policies and responsibilities are defined clearly. The college's strategic management 2001-2004, includes a strong commitment to raising the achievements of all students by ensuring an appropriate curriculum structure and by promoting high quality teaching and learning. The leadership and management promote a sense of community and remarkable cohesion both academically and socially. The senior management team works closely with the head of sixth form and heads of departments to monitor the development and growth of a wide range of Advanced Subsidiary courses. Performance management has ensued effective monitoring of sixth form teachers by heads of most departments under the supervision of their line managers. The individual performances of students are tracked back to teachers and also compared with other subjects. Teachers' weaknesses are identified and dealt with through appropriate training.

105. The induction procedures for post-16 students are good. The transition from Year 11 into the sixth form is well managed. Admission of students into the sixth form follows well organised and structured procedures, at the heart of which lies genuine concern for the individual student. Substantial consultation with teachers, parents and particularly the students themselves enable students to make generally informed choices. As a result of the guidance they receive, most students choose subject combinations, which are relevant to their preferences and aspirations. The college, however, is aware that there is a problem of retention of students particularly at the end of Year 12. Students who leave are mainly those who had previously gained C/D grades in their GCSE. The college has now reviewed the entry criteria and will, in future, for example, take into account those pupils who have taken intermediate GCSE in mathematics or foundation in science. At present, the college is unable to recruit to a one year intermediate GNVQ or other vocational courses. The senior managers and the governing body are aware, however, that these are needed to meet the curricular needs of the lower attainers.
106. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory duties in helping to shape the direction of the sixth form and has generally a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, it does not ensure that all students receive their entitlement curriculum in religious education.

Resources

107. Financial planning is good. Costs for the sixth form are linked appropriately with the priority areas identified in the college development plan. Targets for development are fully costed, with account taken of time and professional development commitments, as well as strictly financial implications. The deployment of the teaching staff is good. The existing expertise and experience of support staff are used appropriately to support efficiently the learning of students. All departments are adequately staffed and, apart from historians teaching psychology and sociology, teachers do not teach outside their own specialist subject. New temporary buildings for the sixth form have been provided but these provide barely adequate teaching areas and social areas for students.
108. The range and quality of learning resources are generally satisfactory. These are often extended by the initiatives of individual departments to acquire materials through links with the local community. Within the college's budget, funds are allocated equitably according to a known formula. The art department for example is well resourced for students to work in a range of media and opportunities in the use of ICT are very good. In history teachers work hard to provide relevant resources for their students but are hampered by the lack of textbooks. In mathematics, individual research and learning opportunities are hampered by a too narrow range of resources and shortage of books. The college library is a useful central resource, which is well used by students. Most departments fully exploit its usefulness as a dimension of their work.
109. Existing learning resources are used effectively and prudently to support learning in most subjects. Heads of departments are fully involved in purchasing, in the light of agreed priorities. As a result, equipment and books for learning are satisfactory and, in some areas, very good. The principles of compare, challenge, consult and compete are well used in pursuing best value in staff deployment and purchasing resources but are not used sufficiently to evaluate the cost effectiveness of various sixth form courses. Taking into account the prior attainment of students, standards of achievement and the good quality of much of the teaching observed, the sixth form is judged to give good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

110. In order to raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education in the college, the governors, senior management team and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, need to:
- Raise pupils' attainment in GCSE English, mathematics, French and history, especially the attainment of boys in English, French and history by:
 - strengthening subject managers' roles in quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and standards in their subjects;

- targeting in-service training on effective teaching methods, where needed;
 - setting subject specific measurable targets to determine value added achievement.
 - matching classroom practice to departmental policies and declared aims;
 - monitoring the impact of whole college initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy;
 - implementing subject specific recommendations in respective subject paragraphs.
 - (Paragraphs: 3, 4, 113, 129, 131, 178, 192)
- Ensure that the college meets statutory requirements in respect of religious education in Years 10-11 by providing adequate time for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11.
 - (Paragraphs: 6, 45, 95, 215, 220)
 - Improve the provision for information and communications technology in Years-10 by:
 - ensuring all subject schemes of work incorporate fully the skills and experiences to be covered
 - producing a detailed curriculum map for Years 10 and 11;
 - ensuring that assessing and reporting on pupils' progress lead to sufficiently detailed individual pupil targets
 - (Paragraphs: 11, 44, 134, 185, 188, 191)

Sixth form

- Raise students' attainment in the sixth form by:
 - using GCSE results to build on their strengths;
 - targeting in-service training on effective teaching strategies, where needed;
 - implementing subject specific recommendations in different parts of this report.
 - (Paragraphs: 15, 16, 224, 229, 237, 238, 246, 263, 271, 279)
- Ensure that the college meets statutory requirement in respect of religious education in the sixth form by providing enough time for religious education in the sixth form curriculum.
 - (Paragraph: 60, 106, 215)
- Improve provision of information and communications technology and its applications across subjects.
 - (Paragraphs: 19, 245)
- Improve procedures for monitoring attendance.
 - (Paragraph: 29)

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|--------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 7 – 11 | 148 |
| | Sixth form | 48 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | | 86 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 7 – 11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 5 | 34 | 65 | 39 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Percentage | 3 | 23 | 44 | 26 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 0 | 9 | 25 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 0 | 19 | 52 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the college's pupils

| Pupils on the college's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|--|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the college's roll | 1057 | 154 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free college meals | 74 | 0 |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|--|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 39 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register | 219 | 5 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 12 |

| Pupil mobility in the last college year | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission | 21 |
| Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving | 32 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | per cent |
|---------------------------|----------|
| College data | 7.6 |
| National comparative data | 7.7 |

Unauthorised absence

| | per cent |
|---------------------------|----------|
| College data | 1.01 |
| 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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 2001 | 135 | 82 | 217 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 73 | 93 | 91 |
| | Girls | 64 | 61 | 62 |
| | Total | 137 | 154 | 153 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | College | 63 (59) | 71 (72) | 71 (64) |
| | National | NA (63) | NA (65) | NA (59) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | College | 26 (17) | 44 (41) | 42 (27) |
| | National | NA (28) | NA (42) | NA (30) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 84 | 94 | 75 |
| | Girls | 70 | 62 | 60 |
| | Total | 154 | 156 | 135 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | College | 71 (68) | 72 (73) | 62 (63) |
| | National | NA (64) | NA (66) | NA (62) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | College | 26 (30) | 40 (48) | 27 (26) |
| | National | NA (31) | NA (39) | NA (29) |

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

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

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | 2001 | 103 | 77 | 180 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 50 | 92 | 98 |
| | Girls | 53 | 75 | 75 |
| | Total | 103 | 167 | 173 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | College | 57 (53) | 92 (93) | 96 (95) |
| | National | NA (47.4) | NA (90.6) | NA (95.6) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | College | 42 (42) |
| | National | NA (38.4) |

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

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

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE Alevel or ASlevel examinations | 2001 | 33 | 32 | 65 |

| 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 | 15.7 (13.9) | 15.6 (14.4) | 15.4 (14.2) | 5.0 (1.7) | 4 (3.0) | 4.3 (2.3) |
| National | NA (17.7) | NA (18.6) | NA (18.2) | NA (2.6) | NA (2.9) | NA (2.7) |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 2 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 2 |
| Indian | 10 |
| Pakistani | 3 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 1189 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 4 |

Exclusions in the last college year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 42 | 4 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 72.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16.7 |

Education support staff: : Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total number of education support staff | 16.38 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 530.75 |

Deployment of teachers: : Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 78.1 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Year 7-Y11

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| Key Stage 2 | NA |
| Key Stage 3 | 23.76 |
| Key Stage 4 | 21.15 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Financial year | 2000/01 |
|----------------|---------|

| | £ |
|--|----------|
| Total income | 3,306702 |
| Total expenditure | 3,264035 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2745 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 31930 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 74597 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|---|----|
| Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years | 14 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years | 10 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 10 |
| 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 | 1182 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 330 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|---|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes college. | 33 | 56 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in college. | 42 | 53 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the college is good. | 27 | 54 | 11 | 1 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 20 | 57 | 20 | 2 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 28 | 62 | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 31 | 52 | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem. | 47 | 43 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 54 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| The college works closely with parents. | 24 | 52 | 17 | 3 | 5 |
| The college is well led and managed. | 25 | 55 | 5 | 2 | 13 |
| The college is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 32 | 56 | 7 | 1 | 5 |
| The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 27 | 44 | 11 | 2 | 17 |

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

ENGLISH

The overall quality of provision for English is good.

Strengths

- The units of work in Year 7 and the contribution these are making to improving literacy skills; the comprehensive units in Years 8 and 9 which promote independent learning.
- Good, energetic teaching which motivates pupils.
- The teaching of literature.
- The very good leadership and management of the department and the commitment of the team to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys in Years 7 to 11.
- Pupils writing skills, especially in Years 7 to 9. Raising the literacy skills of the incoming Year 7 will be a priority for the whole college for some years.

111. Standards in English at the end of Year 9 are below the national average because an increasing number of pupils are entering the college with literacy skills that fall short of expectations. Over 40 per cent of the present Year 8 and 9 pupils read below their chronological age; one quarter of Year 7 is performing well below average. Many are boys whose performance is well below that of girls. Results in the 2000 tests were below average and well below for similar schools. The provisional results in 2001 were a big improvement on the year before with 63 per cent achieving the expected level and 26 per cent achieving the higher levels. These results show that good teaching and rigorous assessment of pupils' performance help pupils to achieve well.
112. Results in the National Curriculum tests fluctuate from year to year and the high standards noted in the last inspection report have not been maintained. However, there are positive signs that the Key Stage 3 Strategy is improving standards. Given the decline in literacy skills on entry, pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9 and good progress throughout Years 10 and 11. In all years, girls outperform boys by a significant margin and the gap between them has increased since the last inspection. Boys' performance confirms the national trend and continues to affect results. Overall, pupils' performance at the end of Year 9 is below that of mathematics and science but is higher by the end of Year 11.
113. The 2000 GCSE results in English and English literature were above the national average and have been since 1999. The percentage of pupils taking the examinations are above the national average and all pupils attained grades A3. Pupils respond positively to literary texts and the literature results were well above average between 1999 and 2000. High attaining pupils did equally well in both English and English literature with 12 per cent achieving the top grades in English and 13.4 per cent in literature. More girls achieve the highest grades but in 1999, boys outperformed girls in literature and their results exceeded the national average and trend for boys. There was a slight dip in the 2001 results when the learning of several disaffected high attaining boys was disrupted because of their behaviour and the low attendance of other disaffected Year 11 pupils. Overall, the department helps pupils with special educational needs and low literacy skills to achieve well by the end of Year 11.
114. Standards in speaking are satisfactory and listening skills are very good. Year 7 pupils readily take part in answering questions and listen very carefully before commenting. They contribute effectively to whole class and group activities and communicate their ideas clearly. For example, discussing the location and description for the blue hotel unit of work before using expressive language to describe the landscape and building. They willingly contributed to a bank of words and explored their suggestions sensibly by sharing their views and listening attentively with concentration and understanding. Pupils understand the importance of listening carefully to instructions and opinions and by the end of Year 9, they buzz with excitement when using talk to explore their ideas as seen in lessons where they worked on producing a travel document. Year 10 and 11 pupils speak confidently and can articulate their views clearly when discussing their work. The high attaining Year 10 pupils give and defend their opinions quite forcefully as seen when they analysed various writers work. Overall, pupils

respond quickly and effectively because of their very good listening and ability to identify and talk about the main points.

115. Attainments in reading are satisfactory in Years-9. Pupils enjoy reading aloud and respond positively to literary texts. They begin to acquire good research skills from Year 7 and show a clear understanding of finding, organising and representing information as seen their research on Dickens' England before they begin reading *Oliver Twist*. They can comment on the symbolic images in their reading, identify clues and the main elements of a story as they affect characters. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils, after reading the first chapter of *Fine The Tulip Touch*, could with support, identify and use appropriate textual evidence and talk about the characters and their relationships and make predictions.
116. By the end of Year 9, all pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of applying research skills to complete the set project on the travel unit. Year 9 pupils understand how to use high order reading skills to skim and scan a dense broadsheet travel article to identify the main features in a travel document. Their response to literary texts is a strength as illustrated in their personal response and to understanding of Almond's *Skellig*. The high attaining Year 9 pupils show a sound grasp of analysing literary texts critically and their written response to poetry from other literary heritages show that they can competently make comparisons across texts, embed quotations in their work and give a personal response. Similarly, lower and average attaining pupils showed a good understanding of Swindell's *Stone Cold* when commenting on the characters and the writer's use of language to portray the main character.
117. By the end of Year 11, the high attaining pupils have a good grasp of literary texts and textual analysis and appreciation are features of their work in English. These pupils read and respond perceptively and show that they can respond to texts from different cultures, periods and times with the same level of intensity and understanding. For instance, their reading and response to Farrell's *Charlotte O'Neal's Song* and Afrika's *'Nothing's Changed'*, showed a very good understanding of the way in which the writers used language to reflect the social and historical influences that shaped the lives of real and fictional peoples' lives. They can explore relationships, make comparisons between texts and respond sensitively and critically with detailed comments as seen in their work on *Macbeth* and Miller's *The Crucible*. Throughout Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress in developing critical skills, albeit, they reflect their levels of attainment. Their understanding of the use of language was well illustrated in the lessons where they explored Duffy's *'Valentine'* and *'War Photographer'*. In particular, pupils were assured that their interpretation was secure when they watched a video with Duffy talking about her work and compared their response with her comments. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs respond well to literary texts although they do so at a more general level as seen in their work on *Macbeth*.
118. Writing skills are good for the high attaining pupils in all year groups. These pupils have a good understanding of planning and structuring their work. They write well, with accuracy and a degree of precision and craft when presenting their ideas. For example, in Year 10, autobiographical writing showed a clear understanding of using imaginative openings and writing techniques to capture the reader's attention. A similar response was seen in a Year 9 lesson where pupils of all abilities identified and used a range of conventions to create a character. In this exceptionally inspiring lesson, pupils modelled their written response on Swindell's *Stone Cold*. Pupils draw on and use a wide vocabulary and in Year 7, the highest attaining pupils write well as seen in their letter of application for a job. Those with special educational needs make good use of writing frames to organise their work and they can write at length and have a sound understanding of undertaking different forms of writing. However, writing skills are the weakest of the attainment targets because although language structure is taught, average and lower attaining pupils and occasionally high attaining pupils do not use correctly a range of punctuation marks to clarify meaning. Ideas are not always clear and whilst lower attaining pupils can articulate their views, they do not always communicate their ideas clearly in writing. There is carelessness in drafting and editing and spelling across the ability range.
119. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. They work hard in lessons, respect each other and show very good understanding of their fellow pupils with learning difficulties. Boys work very well in oral sessions and respond more quickly than girls. They work confidently and all pupils, especially the lower attaining pupils are not daunted by the challenges set.
120. Overall, the quality of teaching is good; very good or excellent in 27 per cent of lessons. Teachers' love for the subject is strong and their very good knowledge and understanding are

used to plan interesting lessons with concise learning objectives to challenge pupils and increase their understanding of language and literature. They use the Key Stage 3 strategy in Years 7 and 8 to develop pupils' writing skills and understanding of grammatical features. They engage pupils and sustain their interest through using interesting stimuli, listening to and extending their views; matching work to pupils' needs and using clear exposition and talk to probe pupils' understanding of the work. They use interactive activities with lower attainers who have statements of educational needs and have varying degrees of behavioural or learning difficulties. The support assistants who work with these pupils help them to have a good understanding of the work. In the best lessons, teachers work in partnership with their pupils, modelling and discussing work so that pupils know and understand what they have to do. This direct partnership approach works and contributes to pupils grasping specific writing skills quickly. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly through questioning, expositions, and eliciting comments from pupils as well as through the achievement records. Marking is very thorough and pupils are in no doubt as to how to improve their work.

121. There is strong and purposeful leadership of the subject. This well led department has a committed team of long serving and new teachers with a clear focus on raising standards. This focus is reflected in the development plan and in the rigorous approach monitoring teaching and learning and the critical self reviews of examination results and curriculum planning. The department has responded positively to the shortcomings outlined in the previous inspection and has made great strides in teaching literature from other cultures, promoting independent learning through new schemes of work and using more challenging texts. The accommodation is excellent but there are insufficient textbooks to support the Key Stage 3 strategy. The department is acutely aware of the priorities for development and realises that boys' achievements, improving oral skills and writing skills are issues, which they are beginning to address. Raising literacy will be a top priority for several years and is a common target for all areas of the curriculum.

DRAMA

The overall quality of provision for drama is good.

Strengths

- Consistently good results that are well above the national average.
- Good interesting teaching.
- Very good assessment procedures.
- Wide and interesting range of extra-curricular activities.
- Very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Texts to meet the demands of the new GCSE course.
- The accommodation and lighting for the main drama studio.

122. The subject is taught in all years as part of the expressive arts curriculum. Standards seen during the inspection were above average, especially in Years 10 and 11. Consistently good results have been achieved in drama and in the 2000 GCSE results 80.4 per cent of pupils gained grades A-C, including 61 per cent grades AB. A higher standard was achieved in 1999 when 86 per cent achieved A-C grades. The present results in 2001 continue the long tradition of high standards with 79 per cent attaining grades A-C. Boys and girls achieve equally well and, overall, pupils perform relatively better in drama than they do in the core subjects and other creative subjects.
123. Standards of achievement are good. Pupils articulate their views clearly and offer constructive criticisms of their work. Pupils use technical terms with ease when structuring a piece of drama. The younger pupil in Years 7 work in line with the national average with most pupils in Year 9 working above expected standards. They know how to use mime and improvisation and demonstrated a good understanding of these conventions when they devised their own plays based on a given framework. For example, pupils used the specific markers including exposition, rising action, climax and resolution to plan and rehearse their scenes. In this particular lesson, pupils worked impressively as directors, audience and critics to improve each stage of their work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 keep meticulous records of their achievements and targets.

124. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 work cooperatively and make good use of stimulus material to create and perform drama. They are very attentive during performances and when evaluating their work. They think creatively and put forward some original ideas and interpretations to their work as seen in the Year 10 lesson where pupils used a simple illustration and the opening paragraph of a folk tale to construct and improvise a range of drama activities. Similarly, Year 11 pupils make good use of stimulus materials to deepen their understanding of moral and social issues as illustrated in their work on selling a contaminated product to a developing country. Pupils used imaginative scenarios to explore their interpretation of the issues as well as to demonstrate their understanding of roleplay. They have an increasing awareness of the use and importance of gestures, movement, space and voice when performing. They know how to take on the characteristics of a character and remain in role. The higher attaining pupils work efficiently, often taking a leading role in groups. Overall, pupils with special educational needs find that they can succeed in drama and they work hard as part of a team to achieve highly in their performances. The written work of the older pupils is satisfactory but lower attaining pupils do not give sustained comments, which affects their overall grades.
125. Teaching is always very good. Teachers have high expectations and exact commitment from all pupils within the limited time they have in the studio. They expect pupils to work quickly with creativity and flair as independent learners capable of making and presenting good drama. Teachers get the best out of their pupils because they use stimulating resource materials and ideas to invigorate their thinking. In addition, teaching is often conducted at a brisk pace and pupils are expected to react quickly. Teachers give good attention to increasing pupils' vocabulary and listening skills. Teachers are particularly effective when they encourage pupils to become autonomous learners, controlling and directing their work. Teachers critically assess and evaluate pupils' work and their methodology works because of the high level of mutual respect and cooperation in all lessons.
126. The department is well led by a teacher who fires her pupils' imagination and demands a high standard from all pupils. The second teacher ably supports her. The very good leadership and management, commitment to high standards and the innovative way of developing pupils as independent learners ensures that standards are maintained. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' overall development through the themes and units of work, including broadening their understanding of other cultural heritages. They run a number of initiatives to increase pupils' cultural and social awareness: theatre trips and productions run jointly with the expressive arts department, theatre in education, residences and drama club.
127. The department has some very good units of work and make good use of the English speaking and listening attainment targets, the Arts Council as well as their own detailed marking criteria. The amount of time allocated for the subject in Years-9 is unsatisfactory. Consequently the work is rushed and there is a lack of continuity as the time is shared with other subjects in the expressive arts department. The department lacks a decent second studio to accommodate the teaching of this highly successful subject. The present arrangement for using the dining hall is unsatisfactory; time is lost and lessons are often interrupted, as this is a thoroughfare. There are no texts to meet the demands of the new GCSE curriculum and the lighting in the main studio is incomplete. Overall, this is a successfully run department, which is a strength of the school and a valuable subject for pupils.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The pupils' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are in line with those expected nationally.
- The National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and learning, particularly in Year 7.
- There is good teamwork within the mathematics department.
- Teachers prepare conscientiously for lessons.
- Pupils have the opportunity to enrich their experience of mathematics through the Junior and Intermediate Mathematics Challenge.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils fail to do as well as they should at the end of Year 11.
- Assessment information on pupils is not always used sufficiently in teachers' planning lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Presently there is no planned whole college programme to enhance and use pupils' numeracy skills across other subjects of the curriculum.

128. On entry to the college pupils' attainment in mathematics is broadly average. By the age of 14, the pupils' attainment remains average overall. However, over several years, the standards reached in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have varied between above average results and those in line with national expectations. Given their starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement for most pupils. When looked at over time, boys' results are lower than those of the girls. This is accounted for mainly by their lower attainment on entry to the college, particularly in the 2000 cohort. The 2001 mathematics test results were similar to those of 2000, although there was a slight increase in the proportion of the college's pupils achieving level 6 or better. Mathematics results in the national tests were better than those of English and similar to those of science. They were also in line with those of similar colleges.
129. In the 2000 GCSE mathematics results, the proportion of the college's pupils achieving grades A*-C was average. The percentage of the pupils' achieving the higher A and A* grades was well below that nationally. Boys' results in mathematics were slightly better than those of the girls, relative to their achievement in other subjects. Based on the pupils' achievements at the end of Year 9, these results were close to those found in similar colleges. However, mathematics results were below those of English and science. The 2001 GCSE mathematics results are lower than those of the previous year.
130. The inspection evidence reflects accurately the pupils' achievements at the end of Year 9, and, overall, is in line with that expected nationally. Higher attaining pupils have good numerical skills and are confident in using a range of mental methods in their calculations. They can work systematically and identify patterns in their investigative tasks although they are not always able to explain their generalisations. Some pupils show weak number skills. They are often uncertain of which order to perform calculations and they find simple fraction work confusing. They are able to use simple spreadsheets in the context of their investigative tasks, but find the written reports of their problem-solving activities quite difficult. Lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, show confusion when matching pairs of numbers to make a whole. Nevertheless, they are competent in working with money, in simple data collection tasks, and in deciding the likelihood of events in relation to the probability scale.
131. Although by the end of Year 11, the standards pupils achieve in their work are below average overall, high attaining pupils in Year 11 solve problems in circle geometry competently, giving reasons for their solutions. They can use algebraic notation accurately and have good number skills. Average attaining pupils, however, often present their work very carelessly and their workbooks sometimes show little progression. They are better at routine mechanical skills than in problem-solving tasks. Misconceptions and mistakes in areas such as probability and graph work are not always followed up. This results in underachievement among a significant proportion of these pupils. Lower attaining pupils, as well as those with special educational needs, rely heavily on their calculators. Nevertheless, they are confident to discuss their methods orally, and some are able to use non-standard strategies in their calculations. In

particular, those with special educational needs make good progress, as for example in the lesson where they were working on volume.

132. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall, though there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within the department. There was some good teaching and only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. The best lessons are well structured and provide activities well matched to pupils' prior attainment, as in the Year 7 lessons observed. These lessons were positively influenced by the National Numeracy Strategy initiative. As a result, the pupils were well motivated, behaved well, and persevered with challenging work. However, in spite of the careful differentiation, work for some gifted pupils does not build sufficiently on their achievements at the end of Year 6. Teachers mostly manage pupils' behaviour well, including some very challenging groups. Most teachers plan the content of their lessons conscientiously, but less often consider a range of activities to help pupils' mathematical understanding. As a result, some pupils become bored and make less progress than they should, as in a Year 8 lesson on polygons. There are missed opportunities to assess and record what pupils actually learn. Moreover, teachers do not routinely use assessment information in their lesson planning. As a result, pupils' strengths and weaknesses in mathematics are not always known clearly, and some marking gives little guidance to pupils on how to improve.
133. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department is unsatisfactory. There has been a deterioration in the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11. Although the day-to-day running of the department is smooth, teachers within the department lack clear guidance, particularly in their work in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' work is not sufficiently monitored so that underachievement is not identified quickly enough. Some groupings of pupils within mathematics do not permit them to learn, as they should. A thorough review of the department's assessment practice as well as an overhaul of its scheme of work for those pupils preparing for GCSE mathematics will aid the department to address the downward trend in what the pupils achieve by the end of Year 11. Although the national numeracy initiative has been introduced in Year 7 within mathematics, there is no policy to guide other departments on how to use and enhance pupils' numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- Standards at the age of 16 are well above average and are improving.
- The quality of teaching is good with some very good features.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Information and communications technology is not used fully to support teaching.
- In some lessons pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities for independent learning.

134. In 2000, the National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average with 64 per cent of pupils obtaining level 5, or above, and 27 per cent level 6 or above. By comparison with similar schools, results were in line with the national average for level 5 or above, but below average for level 6 or above. The performance of boys was similar to that of girls. The results in science were below those for mathematics but better than those for English. Since the last inspection, the trend has been in line with the national trend. Teacher assessment indicates that teachers estimated accurately the performance of pupils. These results represent satisfactory progress in science, since the attainment of pupils on entry to the college was average. Provisional National Curriculum test results show a significant improvement in 2001. Seventy-one per cent of pupils gained level 5 or above and 42 per cent gained level 6 or above. Girls' results are better than those for boys.
135. By the end of Year 9, inspection evidence shows that pupils of all abilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts, improved their understanding of scientific concepts and have made progress in investigative science. For example, higher attaining pupils relate pitch with the frequency of sound waves; demonstrate understanding of the particulate nature of matter and of specific cell adaptations. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding, but for example, can demonstrate an understanding of the

pyramid of numbers. Overall progress in lessons, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is good.

136. In 2000, the results of examinations for the double award GCSE science were above average with 53.9 per cent of pupils gaining grades A-C and 98.2 per cent achieving grades A-G. The performance of boys was similar to that of girls. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels, A* and A, was, overall, in line with the national average, but the performance of girls exceeded that of boys. Science results were better than those for mathematics and similar to those for English. The trend since the previous inspection was in line with the national trend. When the standards attained at GCSE are compared with the results, which these pupils obtained at the end of Year 9, it is clear that progress and achievement through years 10 and 11, including those for pupils with special educational needs, has been slightly above average. Provisional GCSE examination results in 2001 showed a significant improvement with 61 per cent of pupils gaining A-C grades. The results for girls were much better than those for boys.
137. Evidence obtained during the inspection shows that standards are above national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils, for example, are confident in their understanding of the processes of photosynthesis and transportation in plants. Lower-attaining pupils, however, are less confident in their understanding of photosynthesis but, with help, can explain how osmosis works.
138. From work seen during the inspection, it is clear that all programmes of study are well covered and that, overall, investigative science is well integrated into the teaching programme. However, there is less evidence of the planning and evaluation elements of scientific investigations in normal laboratory work. Pupils are encouraged to make hypotheses and to explain results in scientific terms. Experimental results are well represented both graphically and in tabular form.
139. The standard of literacy is good. Higher-attaining pupils cope well with extended writing, using scientific terms with confidence. Spelling is good. Less able pupils, however, are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of scientific terms are less secure. Higher-attaining pupils, particularly boys, throughout the college, speak confidently, describing and discussing experimental work with a good degree of accuracy. Lower-attaining pupils often have greater difficulty in speaking and tend to give brief answers to questions.
140. Numerical competency is also good and is used well for scientific calculations of, for example, pressure and moments. Pupils draw graphs competently and higher-attainers make good use of lines of best fit. The use of ICT to support learning is still less than satisfactory. This was highlighted as a weakness in the previous report. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress. They do not, however, provide focused, subject specific strengths and weaknesses in each attainment target, nor subject specific targets for improvement.
141. The quality of teaching is good. Throughout the main college, the teaching observed was at least good in all but two lessons, in which it was satisfactory. In many lessons teaching was very good. There are features, which are common to most lessons. Teachers make use of their good subject knowledge to provide very effective explanations and to ask questions, which challenge pupils to explain observations or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They set out clear objectives, which pupils understand. To achieve this, teachers ensure that, in the majority of lessons, planning, organisation and classroom management are effective and that lesson content matches the abilities of pupils. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and homework is given, when appropriate, which either consolidates or extends classwork. The teacher, however, over directs a number of lessons. In these, insufficient opportunity is provided for independent learning. Whilst books are always marked and helpful comments are often made, marking rarely indicates the level at which pupils have performed nor how pupils can improve.
142. Teachers usually identify appropriate learning objectives, which offer challenge, and link these with good support for pupils. This enables pupils to make good progress improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and information. In the majority of lessons, pupils work hard and at a good pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Pupils with SEN make good progress as a result of good support by classroom assistants when these are provided.

143. Both the behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to science are very good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. They are attentive, motivated, respond well to teachers' questions and operate sensibly when carrying out practical work in small groups, with many pupils working with a ~~use~~ of commitment.
144. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The allocation of time to the teaching of science matches national recommendations. Whilst overall continuity is good, it may be affected adversely in ~~gaps~~, which are taught by more than one teacher. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those who are gifted or talented, is good. Individual education plans are subject specific although not every teacher is fully familiar with their contents. The provision of learning support assistants is not always satisfactory, particularly in those groups in which there is a significant number of pupils who have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties. The use of information and communications technology, whilst being built into the department scheme of work, is, in practice, used insufficiently as an everyday teaching and learning tool.
145. Assessment is good. Good use is made of pupils' records to identify pupils who are underachieving and to guide teaching. For example, many teachers make good use of their assessment of homework to revisit areas of weakness, thus ensuring that misunderstandings are clarified.
146. The science department is well led by an able and dedicated head of department. She provides clear educational direction, is hard working and committed. Curriculum planning is good. Short-term development planning, which is in line with college development planning, is effective and manageable, but planning for long-term departmental development has yet to be carried out. Procedures for assessment are well established and are used effectively to monitor progress and identify underachievement. The monitoring of the quality of teaching by formal and informal lesson observations is ~~well~~ established and it is used effectively to develop good practice. Even though some laboratories have been refurbished, the number of laboratories is inadequate for this size of college. The number of teaching staff is adequate, they are well qualified, and, overall, they are deployed effectively. However, the number of technicians is inadequate. This was highlighted in the previous inspection report. Resources, in terms of books and scientific equipment are satisfactory, but the provision of ~~up~~-date computers, and appropriate software, is unsatisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

The quality of provision for art is good overall.

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 were much improved on results in recent years.
- ICT is used very well and pupils of all ages produce ~~effective~~ effective images using computer programs.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good and they achieve well, especially in Year 11.
- Assessment and recording are good and pupils engage in regular ~~sa~~ assessment.

Areas for improvement

- In order to raise standards, there is scope for further improvement in teaching and learning.
- Timetabling arrangements for art in Years 8 and 9 have an adverse impact on pupils' motivation and on the quality of their work.

147. Pupils enter the college with variable skills in art. The achievement of a gifted and talented minority is good; that of middle and lower attainers is satisfactory. Achievement is rather better in Year 7 than in Years 8 and 9. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs who are supported within lessons by an educational support assistant make good progress. In some lessons, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties underachieve because they do not apply themselves to the ~~two~~ work. Negative attitudes to the subject and an insufficient work ethic is found in a bigger proportion of boys than girls and goes a long way to explaining the lower attainment and achievement of boys than girls in Years 7 and 9.
148. By the end of Year 9, high attaining pupils work competently in paint and satisfactorily in pastel and pencil crayon. They have good knowledge of tone, colour and pattern. Middle attaining

pupils are able to develop a given subject through a series of studies, as in the observational work on the theme of leaves. The best pieces effectively integrate ideas gained by looking at another artist's work with pupils' own technical experimentation. The work of lower attaining pupils lacks finish and some pupils have difficulty representing objects in three dimensions. Some of the best work is achieved when pupils work after the style of a famous artist, for instance, when pupils in Year 7 produce expressive drawings suggestive of Van Gogh's work. Observational work is relatively weak. This is partly because pupils do not practise and extend this aspect of their work through regular homework. It also reflects a below average visual awareness amongst many of the pupils.

149. GCSE results in the three years from 1998 to 2000 showed that attainment by the end of Year 11 was in line with national expectations. In 2000, results at A/C were above average by a small margin but the points score was slightly below. Provisional results in 2001 show improvement: significantly more pupils gained A* to C grades than in recent years. From current work seen in Years 10 and 11, the achievement of most pupils is in line with the expectations of the GCSE course. However, this is very early in the term and therefore only half way through the course. Coursework from 2001 shows that a significant proportion of pupils achieved well in two and three dimensions and across a range of media; some higher attainers produced very good work. This and the 2001 results themselves indicate attainment above national expectations in Years 10 and 11.
150. By the end of Year 11 higher and middle attaining pupils are competent in working in two and three dimensions, and produce attractive textile pieces. Some very effective large scale work in papier-mâché, on a theme of fruit and vegetables shows good technical control. Pupils collect a variety of imagery in their sketchbooks and relate it to tone, colour, texture and the communication of ideas. Development sheets show good exploration and research on a chosen theme. The best drawing includes good understanding of tone and the most able pupils blend colours effectively. Work from observation is in line with expectations for the majority of pupils but some pupils use pencil crayons and wax crayons in the manner of 'colouring in' than of applying colour to achieve an attractive finish.
151. ICT skills are very well promoted in art and pupils make good progress in reading and writing through research and self-evaluation. More speaking about their own and others' work, and especially about visual perceptions, would heighten pupils' visual awareness and extend their speaking skills. The display of subject vocabulary on classroom walls and especially key vocabulary and definitions in pupils' record books makes a good impact on their literacy.
152. Teaching is satisfactory overall and promotes sound learning. It is mainly satisfactory in Years 7-9, though occasionally good and it was very good in one lesson. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. In Year 10 lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory but it was good in Year 11 and GCSE work from 2001 indicates teaching that it is more often good across the course.
153. Teachers have a good command of the subject and prepare lessons thoroughly. Planning is satisfactory and some lessons are very carefully organised. Where teaching is at its best, lessons proceed at a brisk pace, questioning is lively and pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. Where teaching is satisfactory, behaviour is not managed as firmly as it should be and a significant number of pupils (almost always boys) waste time and behave in an inappropriate and silly manner, occasionally disrupting the learning of others and producing a limited amount of work themselves. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory but pupils could sometimes be challenged to produce work that has greater finish and to work at a faster pace.
154. In Years 7-9, too many pupils— especially boys— have negative attitudes to art and do not come to lessons with the expectation that they will have to work hard. At best, pupils chat too much and so give only superficial attention to their work; at worst, a significant number behave inappropriately and waste time. A minority of pupils, often but not exclusively girls, work quietly and absorbedly. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are generally more prepared to focus on their work and to apply themselves.
155. The curriculum is relevant to the needs of most pupils, although there is scope to improve this by matching some tasks to different abilities and demonstrating practical skills as a matter of course. Planning regularly includes possible extension activities for gifted and talented pupils and these pupils are identified in lessons. Timetabling arrangements in Years 8 and 9, whereby art is taught fortnightly, are detrimental to continuity and progression and are clearly having an adverse impact on pupils' motivation and on the quality of work they produce.

156. Links with the community are very good, for example, exhibitions of a range and variety of the best work are held in local venues and the department contributes to the annual arts festival. Very good extracurricular opportunities and the use of artists-in-residence extend pupils' experiences. Attention to raising pupils' awareness of multicultural design and craftsmanship is good overall and excellent in the Year 8 project on decorative textiles.
157. Assessment and regular recording reflects assessment criteria appropriately. Pupil record books are most useful and pupils are actively involved in self-assessment, writing at length about their experience of each project. Assessment provides a body of information that is capable of informing future planning and teaching. Portfolios of exemplification material are useful and could be more so if they were levelled.
158. The department is managed effectively. Documentation is of good quality and the department runs efficiently from day to day. Staffing is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced and collaborate well. Arrangements for professional development are good but teachers would now benefit from seeing excellent practice elsewhere. Accommodation is adequate, though teaching rooms are rather small and this makes for cramped working and limited storage. The latter is a particular problem, given the large three-dimensional work produced by older pupils. Consumable resources are sufficient to support work across a range of media, giving pupils a good level of choice in Years 10 and 11. In the multicultural project in Year 8, excellent use is made of artefacts from the LEA MSS and this does not to support and enrich pupils' learning. Similarly, the department makes very good use of artists-in-residence and other external resources to support pupils' progress.
159. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The study of the critical and historical aspects of art and design are included, although pupils' knowledge of other artists' work is still limited to artists they have studied recently. The department is working to finalise the revision of its schemes of work in Years 7 to 9. There have been good improvements in assessment. Homework was not set at the time of the last inspection. It is now set 'when appropriate', as suggested by the Expressive Arts policy. It needs to be set more frequently if it is to support pupils' learning and raise standards in Years 7 to 9; it should be built into schemes of work so that identified parts of the National Curriculum are covered and consolidated through homework.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision for design and technology is good.

Strengths

- Pupils consistently achieve above average standards.
- Strong leadership of the head of department.
- Informative marking helps to improve standards.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Lack of technicians support in food technology and textile.
- Provision for low attaining pupils in resistant materials and graphics.

160. The teacher assessment of pupils aged 14 was well above the national average in 2000. Girls' attainment was significantly better than that of boys at the highest levels. The scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection indicates that attainment is above the national expectation. However, it indicates that assessment is sometimes too generous. A significant number of pupils are being awarded a level 5 when they are working towards that level, but not actually achieving it. The provisional results for 2001 show similarly high achievement.
161. By the age of fourteen, pupils handle an appropriate range of materials and equipment safely and competently. Their practical skills are well developed and their finished products are generally of a good standard. All pupils confidently use the design process. They produce alternative designs before deciding which one is the best. They design to meet the needs of particular people and this involves them in carrying out their own research to ensure that their designs are suitable. All pupils make good use of computers to record and present their results. When evaluating the success of their final products, lower attaining pupils comment on what they like or dislike about their product and can say what went well and what they might

change next time. Higher attainers are able to produce detailed, well reasoned analytical comments. The quality of presentation varies and is generally higher in food and textiles. This is also the case in terms of the quantity and depth of work produced. Some of the assessed tasks in food and textiles are of a very high standard at the end of Year 9.

162. GCSE results in 2000 were well above the national average in design and technology in terms of the number of pupils achieving AC grades. Standards in food studies and textiles were well above the national average, while those in graphics products and resistant materials were below. Careful analysis of the reasons for this enabled the head of department to introduce new strategies targeted at raising the attainment of boys. Consequently, the provisional results for 2001 show a considerable improvement. Standards in food studies, textiles and graphics products are well above the national average, while those for resistant materials are in line.
163. The scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection supports these findings. Attainment in food studies and textiles coursework folders is already of a good standard and pupils are receiving the advice and support they need to improve them still further. In graphics products and resistant materials, standards are satisfactory, but a lot of work is unfinished or in draft form. Pupils are receiving the advice they need to improve but they are slow to do anything about it. All pupils make good use of computers to carry out their research. They competently use the Internet to acquire information, word process questionnaires, enter answers onto spreadsheets and produce their findings using a range of graphical techniques. Some pupils make good use of computers to help produce their designs and in textiles they competently use computerised sewing machines.
164. The college is successful in ensuring that all those pupils who study A Level achieve a pass. In 2000, the percentage achieving AC grades was below the national average. However, the numbers taking this examination are relatively small and are therefore unreliable. The provisional results for 2001 show an improvement, with more pupils achieving the higher grades, particularly in product design. All those who took A Level were successful. The observation of lessons and scrutiny of work during the inspection indicate that all pupils in Year 13 are on target to pass the examination, with a significant number likely to achieve A grades.
165. Overall the quality of teaching is good. It is significantly better in food and textiles and much of the teaching in these subjects is very good or excellent. In these lessons, teachers have a good relationship with the pupils and consequently they are keen to please. They have high expectations of the quantity, depth and presentation of pupils' work. They provide detailed guidance which pupils find easy to follow. As a result, the quality of their work is good. These lessons are conducted at a lively pace and questioning is very well used to get pupils to show initiative and solve problems for themselves.
166. Teachers mark the work frequently and this means they spot any difficulties early and provide pupils with the support they need to overcome them. In textiles and food lessons, teachers are very conscious of meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. They ensure that lower attainers receive more structured activities so they can tackle the work in 'bite size' chunks. They also plan additional activities, which extend the highest attainers or challenge them to put much more thought into their work. Teachers in graphics and resistant materials are beginning to take individual needs into account, but this is still in the early stages of development. Not all lessons achieve this and on occasions it leads to unsatisfactory teaching and learning. When this happens, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs struggle to complete the activities set. The lack of helpful teacher support means they are unable to achieve success. Consequently pupils' behaviour and attitudes deteriorate and the standard of work is low.
167. All teachers have a good understanding of the subject and they are able to provide skilful demonstrations of new skills and techniques. Consequently, pupils quickly become competent in a good range of skills and techniques and the quality of their practical work is good. The teachers are all well organised and lessons run smoothly so that good use is made of the time available. In resistant materials and graphics, pupils and teachers benefit from the excellent support provided by the technician. He ensures that all the materials required are readily to hand and that all the machinery is well maintained and works efficiently. The quality of marking is variable, but all teachers complete pupils' review sheets conscientiously and set realistic and achievable targets. They give freely of their time after college to help pupils of all ages and abilities to improve their work.

168. Reports to parents are written well, but are particularly informative in food and textiles. Teachers plan interesting activities and this means that pupils generally enjoy the subject. In Year 9, pupils are given the chance to specialise in the subject they intend to study for their GCSE. This is very successful in ensuring that pupils are interested and motivated. As a result, they generally make good progress in Year 9 and consequently achieve higher than average standards. All teachers are competent in their use of ICT. They plan regular opportunities for pupils to use computers and this increases their interest in the subject. Teachers consciously plan to develop pupils' literacy and number skills. Considerable emphasis is placed on the need to use and spell the correct technical vocabulary. Pupils are actively encouraged to carry out in-depth research using books and computers. Frequent opportunities are planned, which involve pupils analysing the results of surveys and presenting them graphically. Weighing, measuring and estimating are integral parts of pupils' work.
169. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in the food technology and textiles rooms. The outside appearance of the technology block is dilapidated and creates a bad impression of this successful department. The lack of a technician in the food technology rooms creates unnecessary work for the teachers and they have to put an unreasonable amount of time into ensuring their lessons run smoothly. The college needs to address these issues. Meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is not yet secure in resistant materials and graphics lessons. This needs to be improved. Assessment at the age of fourteen is currently too generous and the college needs to ensure coursework is more rigorously marked and moderated.
170. The management of the department is very effective. The head of department has a clear vision of what needs to be improved and has sensible strategies for achieving this. Her monitoring of teaching and learning is very thorough and has enabled her to pinpoint individual strengths and weaknesses very accurately. She has built a team of specialist teachers who are committed to improving standards. As a result, considerable improvements have been made since the last inspection. Teaching is now good overall with all age groups. Assessment is effective and the quality of marking has improved. Schemes of work now follow a common format and they are detailed and easy to follow. The management of the department has become increasingly effective and monitoring systems are successful.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- GCSE results above national averages.
- The lowest attaining pupils are well supported in their studies.
- Good teaching in all lessons seen.
- Well planned fieldwork to extend pupils' geographical skills.
- Leadership and management very good.

Areas for improvement

- More challenge for gifted and talented pupils.
- Greater curricular liaison with primary schools.

171. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are fully in line with national expectations and the teachers' assessment indicates that pupils' attainment in geography is above that of pupils in similar colleges. Inspection evidence indicates that in Years 7 standards of achievement are above national expectations. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs acquire and consolidate sound understanding of geographical concepts, skills and understanding. Pupils in Year 7 can explain with confidence the reasons for using appropriate map skills and can use geographical vocabulary correctly. In Year 8, pupils show good knowledge and understanding of global sources of energy and some high attaining pupils, for example, could explain 'how the exploitation of non-renewable resources can have unintended environmental effects.' Pupils in Year 9 could evaluate competently alternative strategies for managing man-made hazards. Low attaining pupils are well supported and make good progress. They could explain how a volcano can bring benefits as well as hazards to a community.

172. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results have been consistently above the national average. In 2000, the percentage of the entry gaining grade A*, 63 per cent, was significantly above the national average of 54 per cent. Results were well above the national average in 1999: 72 per cent gained A*-C grades. The provisional results for 2001 indicate a significant rise in the percentage of pupils gaining A* from 63 per cent in 2000 to 67 per cent in 2001.
173. These standards are borne out by observation of classes and scrutiny of work. Most pupils in Years 10 have a good knowledge and understanding of geographical terms and high attaining pupils are able to use them with accuracy in their oral and written work. Pupils have a good grasp of geographical terms and concepts which they use to describe accurately geographical occurrences. Pupils in Year 10, for example demonstrated a good grasp of flood hazards and discussed social and economic effects of flood events. Pupils benefit from some very good, well planned fieldwork, for example an urban study of deforestation and optional study of geographical issues in the Peak District in Year 10. Good use is made of computers to support GCSE course work in Year 10. Low attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress. For example a Year 11 group was observed successfully comparing a satellite image with two maps and focused on issues arising from opencast mining. Policies for educational inclusion are strong and successful.
174. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7-11 is good and some very good teaching was observed. . All the teachers are well qualified and dedicated professionals: they work hard to create varied and interesting lessons. The best teaching is based on a secure knowledge of the subject. Such lessons are characterised by detailed planning, pace, high expectations and effective classroom management, with pupils engaged and challenged by their studies. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and extend their thinking, reading and extended writing skills particularly in fieldwork assignments. The teachers know their students well, and evaluate their work with helpful and constructive comments. The work in geography contributes well to the further development of pupils' literacy and numeracy. In Years 7 and 8, tasks are well matched to pupils' prior attainment. Consequently all pupils, including pupils with special needs, make good progress. The department recognises that the provision for the most gifted and talented pupils needs further attention.
175. The pupils' response in almost all lessons seen was good: they genuinely appreciate their teachers' hard work. Pupils display positive attitudes towards work in geography. Most pupils are motivated by their studies and are attentive, remain on task, concentrate and respond well. Pupils are capable listeners, ask questions and are keen to please and produce accurate, well presented work. Pupils across all years show concern for other pupils' points of view.
176. The leadership and management of geography are very good. The head of department encourages the teachers and the students of geography in a positive manner, and he commands their respect. Policies for educational inclusion are strong and successful. He has monitored effectively the work of teachers in the department. The staff handbook is an excellent document. Resources for the subject are mostly good. Care has been taken to choose interesting and relevant textbooks, and a good variety of practical fieldwork equipment has been acquired to support teaching and learning. Good use is made of the college library and the county library service. The very good displays of pupils' work most notably their fieldwork - greatly enhance the teaching area and give students a very positive atmosphere in which to work.
177. The department has responded positively to the previous report. The number of full time geography staff has been increased from one to four. There is now a strong team, and all the four teachers have worked successfully at improving the pupils' use of independent inquiry, of group work, and of questions and observations from students. These features were criticised in the previous OFSTED report in 1996, but good practice in all these areas was observed during this inspection. Monitoring of work is now effective and constructive. Liaison with primary schools remains as an area for further development.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- The high quality of teaching by which staff use methods and resources to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met and that they can all achieve some form of success.

- The department is well managed and the new scheme of work is effective in providing pupils with opportunities to acquire historical skills.
- Lessons are planned in detail and teachers work hard to produce resources, which motivate and challenge pupils of all abilities.
- The department is becoming skilled at analysing pupils' performance and taking action to modify teaching approaches as a result.
- Library provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Results at GCSE have regressed and boys' attainment in particular is well below average.
- The targeting of pupils to ensure that they all reach their full potential at the end of Year 11.

178. At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. They acquire sound chronological skills in Year 7, analyse increasingly difficult source material in Year 8 and, in Year 9, give convincing arguments about the reliability of different kinds of ~~evide~~ evidence. GCSE results in 2000 were broadly in line with the national average and girls performed better than boys. Provisional results for 2001 show a significant drop in the percentage of pupils gaining higher GCSE grades A-C from 57 per cent in 2000 to 42 per cent in 2001. Girls again outperformed boys by a wide margin. Less than half the boys entered for the examination reached their predicted grade.
179. Standards of work seen during the inspection, mainly because of good teaching and high levels of challenge and expectation, were better than the 2001 results indicate and pupils are now achieving in line with national expectations in Years-11. In Year 9, for example, although lowerattaining pupils find extended writing difficult, they can make accurate comments about photographic evidence on the Plains Indians. Pupils operating at higher levels can give quite convincing arguments about the significance and reliability of sources, also in relation to the American West. From work seen in Year 11, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is narrowing markedly and boys are now achieving in line with expectations. In Year 10, pupils regard sources as a supportive series rather than individual pieces of evidence; they are able to challenge the teachers and use relevant documents to support their views, for example, on medicine through the ages. Across the college, literacy is improving and pupils read aloud with confidence and with understanding.
180. Pupils respond well to the teaching of history. They show interest in the subject matter, speak highly of their teachers, thrive on hard work and rise to the challenge when the work becomes difficult. When given the opportunity, they work well in pairs and in groups and like to discuss the topics in hand with each other. They enjoy helping their classmates and are delighted when others succeed. They volunteer to read aloud and, particularly in Year 9, are keen to answer questions in class. Presentation of work in exercise books is variable but most pupils take pride in completing their assignments. They get on well with each other and treat visitors with respect.
181. The high quality of teaching is the major strength of the department and is characterised by sound subject knowledge, challenge, relevant questioning techniques, pace and effective classroom management. Teachers encourage pupils to think and place great emphasis on the acquisition of historical skills. However, teachers do not lose sight of the fact that youngsters are naturally inquisitive and that history is essentially a fascinating story about people. During the inspection, teaching was never less than satisfactory and in 70 per cent of lessons it was good or very good. Very good teaching was seen in Years 10. Pupils are given opportunities to learn in many different ways because teachers employ varied and stimulating methods. Teachers, for example, challenge Year 7 pupils to think like historians and pupils, in turn, always give reasons for their answers. Because teachers have high expectations and say, 'I know this is difficult, but I'm sure you can do it,' pupils have confidence in their teachers and are not afraid to make intelligent guesses and, sometimes learn from their mistakes. Pupils are becoming increasingly more adept at using historical terminology and are supported in their efforts to use historical language accurately because teachers use it frequently. Although boys do not participate enthusiastically in oral exchanges, teachers are fostering improved boys' achievement by demonstrating real classroom presence, and by insisting that they remain on task, checking on progress regularly. In a coursework lesson on Fotheringhay Castle, for example, the teacher was so tenacious in keeping everyone on task, that boys in particular surprised themselves at the extent and quality of their writing. In a Year 10 lesson on the American West, the use of a variety of film clips motivated a challenging group to make quite sharp and thoughtful comments about the lives of Plains Indians and about the different ways in which they are portrayed in the media. Teachers always treat their pupils with respect

and they care for both their academic and their social progress. They are concerned to recognise, celebrate and build upon the industry, efforts and the skills of their pupils. Most lessons, therefore, are a constant dialogue between teachers and pupils.

182. The head of department leads the subject with skill and high levels of industry. She has a vision for the teaching of history and supports non-specialist teachers most effectively. Departmental documentation is of high quality and offers good advice on methods to bring about success. The classrooms are adorned with pupils' work and subject terminology. Pupils in every year are offered opportunities for fieldwork and visit sites of historical interest and several museums. Learning resources are adequate and are augmented by a plethora of worksheets and booklets written by teachers. Library resources are very good and pupils also benefit from the department's emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT): pupils visit the ICT suite during every study unit.
183. The department has made sound progress since the last inspection. Teaching is now better, pupils in Key Stage 3 are acquiring skills at a much faster rate and the support for non-specialists is a strong feature. Priorities for improvement are well founded and history is, therefore, well placed for future development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of discrete provision in ICT is good. However, ICT skills across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- The standards which students attain in public examinations at ages 16 and 18.
- The quality of teaching and learning for students in examination groups in Years 10 and 11 and at post-16.
- The clear and purposeful leadership given by the head of department.
- The quality and quantity of the resources and accommodation across the college for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- ICT skills of pupils in Years 7-9.
- The system to check that the skills of information and communication technology are delivered through the other subjects of the curriculum in Years 7 to 10.
- The lack of discrete provision for ICT in Years 9 to 11 and the amount of time allocated to this discrete provision in Years 7 and 8.

184. The results attained in public examinations in the year 2000 for pupils aged 16, and in those for students aged 18, were above the national average. These results are similar to those in previous years and to those, which students attained in the 2001 examination series although these are yet to be moderated against the national picture. The inspection findings show that pupils in examination groups in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form achieve well and make good gains in their learning. However, the skills of pupils in Years 9, and those who are not in examination groups in Years 10 and 11, are below those, which would be expected.
185. As pupils enter the college, their skills in ICT are widening, but overall, are below those, which would be expected. In Years 7 and 8, pupils receive one discrete ICT lesson each fortnight and it is planned that the consolidation and development of the skills introduced in these lessons will be through the work they do in the other subjects of the curriculum. In Year 9, and for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take ICT as an examination course, it is planned that their skills will be delivered and developed through the subjects of their curriculum and they do not have any timetabled ICT lessons. This situation is unsatisfactory as it does not allow sufficient time for pupils to develop and consolidate their skills and consequently the skills of these pupils are unsatisfactory.
186. In the timetabled ICT lessons, pupils make use of an introductory self-learning and assessment package, 'Keybytes', once they have been taught how to access the facilities and software packages. This package consists of a core content section and an optional section. In Year 7, all pupils complete the core contents, which help them to gain sound knowledge of basic keyboard and mouse skills. They acquire a satisfactory grasp of the main features of the hardware associated with ICT and its wider applications. They learn appropriately to use word processing to produce and illustrate text documents and interrogate spreadsheets and

databases. In timetabled lessons pupils practise basic skills and they undertake competently currency conversion tasks and can design packaging for soap bars. At the end of the year, many are able to complete successfully an assessment related to advertising. They are expected to use the skills they have learnt in the other subjects of the curriculum. For example in design and technology they use successfully drawing packages for design purposes and in art they use confidently a range of skills to search for information on the Intranet and to incorporate this into their notes and essays. In modern languages they make good use of CD-Rom and audio facilities, and word process simple sentences. However, there is no effective system in place to ensure that the pupils are able to use the skills they have learnt in these subjects and overall, by the end of Year 7, their skills are unsatisfactory and below those which are expected.

187. In Year 8, through their timetabled ICT lessons, pupils work on the optional section of 'Keybytes' and suitably extend their skills in word processing and in using the database and spreadsheet software by learning to use the more advanced features in these packages. They investigate confidently the use of computers in the 'high street' and through this are introduced to how data can be input into a computer and how computers can be used to monitor and control operations and systems. Through activities such as producing a college brochure they learn the basics of desktop publishing but by the end of the year only the high attaining pupils can use successfully a simulation programme based on a Royal Air Force search and rescue scenario. Again the expectation that they will practise and extend their skills through work in the other subjects of their curriculum is not monitored and by the end of Year 8 their skills are still unsatisfactory.
188. There are no timetabled lessons for ICT for pupils in Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who are not taking the GCSE course in ICT, have unsatisfactory opportunities to learn information and communications technology in other GCSE courses. Whilst many of the applications in art, design and technology and modern languages, are good, they are largely as a result of the interest and at the discretion of individual teachers and pupils and do not cover collectively the national requirements in the subject. Few pupils show confidence in using their ICT skills and when these skills are needed to support their work in other subjects of the curriculum, teachers in these subjects have to revise and re-teach these skills. This inhibits progress and does not allow ICT to be used effectively in the development of subject skills. Pupils in Year 11 who do not study ICT as a subject do not have the information and technology skills by the end of their time in college to allow them to use the subject as an effective tool for learning.
189. Overall, the quality of teaching in the small number of programmed ICT lessons in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory. All specialist teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. They plan carefully and develop good relationships with the pupils, which enhance their learning. They use assessment appropriately but often marking and written feedback does not always clearly identify what pupils need to do to improve. This is often more effective through the oral feedback. In Years 10- 11, the quality of teaching for those pupils who are taking GCSE information and communication technology courses is good and enables them to make good and often very good progress in their learning. This is particularly so in Year 11 when the groups are taken by specialist staff. This teaching is characterised by learning objectives being clearly explained and shared with pupils at the start of lessons and then reviewed and targets set for future learning through well-planned plenary sessions. Again relationships are good and assessment linked to the individual target setting ensures that pupils are clear about the areas for improvement in their work and this enables them to achieve their best. These features extend into the sixth form where again the overall quality of teaching is good, with many very good features. All lessons in both the Level and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education programmes in the sixth form are taught by specialist staff. Their use of assessment and their very good subject knowledge linked to a rolling programme of individual student review and target setting on a monthly basis ensure that all pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well with many making very good progress and achieving very well.
190. The department is well led. The head of department has a very clear view about how information and communication technology should develop across the college. The departmental policy document and handbook for staff are good. There are clear schemes of work in place for the planned provision and a very appropriate subject action plan has been developed. The coordination of the cross-curricular provision is the joint responsibility of the senior management team and the head of department. In which the role of the head of department is to advise and support.

191. The college has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. The college has made good use of its own and external grants to develop good resources and accommodation, through information and communication technology suites in different areas of the college. However, many of these have only recently been completed and brought on line and there has not been sufficient time for them to make an impact on the pupils' standards. Across the college these facilities are well serviced by technicians who work effectively to ensure that the various networks and hardware are fully functional and that any problems are dealt with quickly and efficiently. The provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 remains unsatisfactory. The department is understaffed which affects adversely the college's ability to monitor, support and extend ICT applications in other subjects of the curriculum. To progress further the college should introduce a broader curriculum to cover the National Curriculum requirements for all pupils, seek ways to help the head of the department to undertake the co-ordination of the subject more fully and establish an ICT group to oversee future curriculum and other developments.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The overall quality of provision for modern foreign languages is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Improving attainment in German.
- Enriching programme of extracurricular activities.
- Successful broadening of curriculum through the introduction of Spanish.
- Curricular links with primary schools.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in French.
- Attainment and progress of boys.
- Pupils' speaking skills.
- Further sharing of good classroom practice.

192. Results at GCSE in French over the last three years have shown a steady decline. In 1999, they were above the national average, but in 2000 were below the national average. Provisional results for 2001 suggest a further fall, although an appeal about twelve candidates' results has been made. Results in German have varied. In 1999, they were well above the national average, and in 2000 well below the national average. Provisional figures for 2001 indicate a significant rise to a level above the national average. The proportion of candidates gaining A*-A grades has been consistently below average in both languages. Girls perform better than boys.
193. In work seen, the standards achieved by pupils at the age of 14 are in line with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate a good understanding of past and future tenses in their written work. They speak well in situations controlled by the teacher, but they are much less confident when asked questions of a general nature based on previous learning. Other pupils have satisfactory listening skills, but their written work shows many errors in verb endings and in the use of tenses. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their small teaching groups. They understand short extracts of spoken language and make short, appropriate responses to brief questions on rehearsed topics.
194. The standards of achievement of work in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Pupils perform better in German than in French. The work of higher attaining pupils is good. They understand spoken and written language well. Within situations controlled by their teacher and in practice for their GCSE examinations, pupils speak well, but they lack confidence when speaking in unpredicted situations, even on everyday topics. Pupils with special educational needs have made satisfactory progress by the age of sixteen.
195. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. There are several elements of good teaching in lessons throughout the college. However, the inconsistency of examination results is reflected in an inconsistency of practice by teachers across the department. Good lessons have a brisk pace, which keeps pupils on their toes. In most lessons, teachers provide a variety of activities, which enable pupils to practise listening, reading, speaking and writing. Teachers have begun to make effective use of the recently installed ICT facilities to develop pupils' comprehension and oral skills so that individuals may progress at their own rate. The teaching of modern

foreign languages makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills by encouraging pupils to think about language, to use grammatical terms, and to recognise patterns in the foreign language and compare them to their own language. Teachers use the foreign language extensively and so set their pupils an appropriate challenge. On the other hand, there is insufficient insistence on making pupils use the foreign language for "real" purposes or for routine talk in the classroom. Opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills are missed. In a minority of lessons the pace is slow and pupils do not apply themselves to their work as well as they could. The narrow range of teaching methods used in the preparation of pupils for their GCSE examinations does not sufficiently challenge the higher attaining pupils, nor does it prepare them thoroughly for further study of foreign languages beyond the age of sixteen.

196. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. With the valuable support of the local authority advisory service and the college's senior management team, the head of department has identified areas for improvement and is developing with her colleagues a shared vision relating to the raising of standards. Recent appointments to the department are helping to contribute effectively to that vision. Many of the challenging tasks set out on the award of Language College status to the college have been met. An increase has been made in the number of pupils who study two foreign languages after the age of fourteen. The introduction of a third language taught twice a week after college to pupils in Year 9 has resulted in a healthy take-up of Spanish in Year 10. A rich programme of exchanges and residential visits makes an important contribution to the interest and motivation of pupils. Good links with the wider community are being forged through the training of tutors in the local adult education centre and the sharing of the facilities of the college's language centre with them. Work on the provision of clear targets for pupils' improvement and which relates to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades is in need of further development. The recently introduced procedures to reward pupils for use of the foreign language need careful monitoring in order to ensure that all teachers carry them out consistently. Strategies aimed at raising the standard of boys' work, especially in French, would contribute substantially to an overall improvement of standards.

MUSIC

The overall provision for music is good.

Strengths

- Standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE examination are well above the national average.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11 contributing significantly to pupils' learning.
- Pupils are well motivated and committed to their music lessons.
- The department is well organised and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Improving access for pupils to adequate and appropriate ICT equipment.
- The range and variety of teaching styles are restricted by the accommodation available for music.

197. The music department has a good record of examination results. Although only a small number of pupils choose to study music for the GCSE examination, GCSE results in music are well above the national averages for the last three years. They are well above the average compared with similar colleges for grades A*, A*-G and average points scores. The proportion of pupils gaining A* has increased consistently, from 75 per cent in 1999 to 80 per cent in 2000. The provisional results for 2001 indicate that 85.7 per cent of pupils achieved the highest A*-C grades this year. Girls continue to attain higher grades than boys.
198. The teacher assessments for pupils at the age of 14 indicate that attainment is above national expectations. However, pupils' singing and oral skills using musical terminology to compare and contrast pieces of music are not as high as their performing and composing skills. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys. The inspection evidence confirms that standards of achievement in music are satisfactory overall with good skills in performing and composing for pupils in Years 7-9. Pupils use well produced notebooks that are designed to help pupils and teachers monitor and assess progress during each topic studied. This ensures that a musical picture of pupil progress is built up during Years 7-9 and identifies musical strengths clearly. This system is continued for pupils studying music beyond the age of 14 so they can improve and develop their weaker musical skills. Pupils in Year 10 could discuss clearly how they need to improve their work through specific skills work, for example one pupil knew they had to improve fluency by using correct fingering when playing keyboard pieces.
199. Pupils learn well because the teaching is good. Teachers show good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, have high expectations and lessons are well structured. During a very good lesson pupils were taken through a listening exercise that ensured that they knew exactly how to approach the exercise. The pupils were given clear explanations which ensured that musical information was gathered quickly while listening to a piece of music and then used to best effect in their written answers. Later in the same lesson the pupils discussed how they had worked through short composing activities in order to construct longer pieces. This meant that pupils could discuss clearly using musical reasons and rationale for how compositions developed. One pupil had chosen to use a jig as a composition style and she spoke clearly how the piece developed into a rondo, using a variety of key changes and chord patterns. All musical skills were seen during the inspection but singing techniques were not always given prominence in lessons. In one lesson pupils continued trying to sing in two parts when neither part had been learnt securely. As a result the pupils tried to 'out sing' each other and quality, pitch and diction all suffered. A good range of musical starter activities are used at the beginning of lessons. Pupils join in enthusiastically but do need always to know the musical reason for their use. The use of rhymes and word sequences help pupils to organise and structure rhythm patterns which can be played on percussion instruments. Pupils are also encouraged to count beats and translate them into music bars. This is a good example of numeracy being used to support music learning. These and other activities are well designed and ensure that those pupils with special educational needs and pupils who are gifted and able approach activities at appropriate levels. One pupil, who is a talented cellist, notated his own rhythm patterns and played them during the plenary session rather than using the examples given to the class. This approach ensures that all pupils make good progress.
200. All pupils are well motivated and enthusiastic about the music they play and study. Behaviour is good and pupils work supportively when practising and listen carefully to each other's performances and teacher demonstrations. The accommodation available for music lessons is

very cramped and pupils have to move around carefully when working in different parts of the classroom. The lack of appropriate space does restrict the variety of teaching styles that can be undertaken. The instrumental lessons are well organised and are financed by the college budget. This ensures that any pupil is able to benefit from lessons that are well taught. Pupils are entered for Associated Board examinations and achieve good results. The peripatetic teachers are actively involved in the ensembles and concerts organised by the department.

201. The department is well organised and managed. The department monitors the subject annually and teaching is organised in conjunction with the expressive arts department. This ensures that concepts common to the expressive arts are studied within the separate departments so that pupils can identify similarities and differences. At present the department does not have sufficient appropriate information and communication technology. It is not possible to run music programs that would enable all pupils to compose using a variety of methods. At present they are unable to store, retrieve and explore musical sounds. A new range of other resources including keyboards and percussion instruments has recently been bought. A good range of music books and cassettes are available in the library.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is good

Strengths

- Strong leadership of the department.
- A wide range of extracurricular activities, which are well supported by large, enthusiastic groups of pupils.
- Good quality teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all staff members give pupils the opportunity to be involved in the evaluation of each other's performances.
- Indoor facilities for PE.

202. The number of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the GCSE in July 2000 were in line with the national average. There was a significant improvement in the grades achieved in the 2001 examination when the A*-C grade passes were well above the national average. In September 1996 the college began offering its students the opportunity to take an A-level in sports science. A small number of students have taken the examination for the past three years and obtained pass grades that were well below the national average. However, the number of students taking the first A-level in 2001 increased and they gained pass grades that are in line with the national average.

203. Pupils arrive from their primary schools bringing with them a range of physical education skills with a significant number of them with levels below that expected. They settle into the college quickly, make good progress, and by the time they are 14 years old most are attaining levels of performance that are in line with national expectations, with a significant number doing even better. This judgement is in line with teacher assessments. Pupils perform well in a wide range of physical education activities. In games activities pupils have an emerging knowledge of rules and conventions of a number of games, and are developing the skills to enable them to compete successfully. When learning new skills they observe accurately the teacher or other pupils so know what to do as they start to practise. They are able to adapt and refine their performances to meet the challenging situation created by the use of grids for group work and small-sided games. The overall standard of swimming is very good, with very few non swimmers in the college. Most pupils are able to demonstrate a high level of competency in a variety of strokes as well as water polo, life saving and personal survival techniques. Pupils understand the need for warming up effectively and are putting this knowledge into practice at the beginning of lessons.

204. The achievement of most pupils by the end of Year 11 has improved since the last inspection, and their attainment levels are now at least in line with national expectations, with a majority of pupils, particularly those in the examination groups, attaining standards that are higher than those seen nationally. Pupils are developing good skills in performance and evaluation in a range of games and sporting activities. They have a good knowledge of rules and tactics and are able to undertake a range of roles including performing, officiating and coaching. Pupils in

the examination groups are developing an understanding in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The standard of attainment of students studying for the A-level examination is now in line with national expectations. They are confident in the use of technical language in their written and oral work, and contribute to lively debate in lessons. Some use their information technology skills to produce good quality course work and to access the Internet to increase their knowledge and understanding. The college has a justifiably high reputation for the performances of its many college teams. Pupils have represented the district in a variety of sports, and some have gone on to represent Northamptonshire. A few pupils have gained national honours.

205. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, are given much support both by teachers and fellow pupils and reach a very satisfactory level of attainment. ~~Being~~ is sensitive and there is no evidence of pupils with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Talented pupils are encouraged to extend their skills both in college lessons and with ~~out~~ college clubs.
206. The department has maintained the good standard of teaching noted in the last inspection. All the lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory and the vast majority were judged to be good or very good. All lessons begin in an orderly manner, with objectives being clearly stated, and understood by the pupils. Activities are chosen that sustain pupils' interests and involvement. There is an expectancy that all pupils will work well, and generally these expectations are met. Pupils are taught to ~~evaluate~~ their own performance in some lessons, but in order to meet the National Curriculum requirements in this area of the subject; this aspect needs to be developed. The two swimming instructors make a very positive contribution to helping pupils attain high standards of swimming. Teachers show care and concern for their pupils whilst encouraging the best in fair play, ~~cooperation~~ and competitive experience. Pupils respond very positively to the high quality teaching. They are enthusiastic, behave well and the vast majority are prepared to work very hard. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.
207. The curriculum, which meets statutory requirements, allows pupils to take part in a wide variety of activities. The time allocated for the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good and allows them to cover all the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, as reported at the time of the last report, the time allocated to Years 10 and 11 is below the recommended minimum, and there are times when large teaching groups are inhibiting progress. There is no provision for students in the sixth form to take part in ~~no~~ examination physical education activities. The department has good assessment procedures, with comprehensive information on pupils' achievement and attainment being kept in a readily accessible form. Teachers use this information to influence the future curriculum planning decisions and to set targets for individual pupils.
208. Many staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities, lunchtime and after college clubs, and interclass competitions which are very well supported by large numbers of enthusiastic pupils. A good example of this type of activity is the Wednesday lunchtime table tennis club, ~~with~~ over 60 pupils attend regularly.
209. Strong leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. High quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work, and helps the delivery of the subject. Departmental displays ~~around~~ the college are of high quality and effectively stimulate pupils' interest in the subject. Staff who teach physical education, work well together, support each other, and show a very strong commitment to their pupils.

DANCE

Overall, the quality of provision in dance is good.

Strengths

- Clear purposeful leadership.
- Good quality teaching.
- Good time allocation for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the accommodation for the subject.

210. Dance is taught to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 within the expressive arts curriculum area. Most pupils arrive at the college with a very limited experience of dance, but generally respond to the good teaching, so that by the end of Year 9 most pupils are able to demonstrate good patterns of movement and gesture which are performed with clarity and fluency. Pupils are beginning to evaluate each other's dance performance, and to make perceptive suggestions on how improvements can be made. The levels of attainment by the time they reach 14 years is at least in line with national expectations, with a minority of them, particularly girls, doing even better.
211. In Years 10 and 11 dance is not a compulsory subject, but pupils have the opportunity to take a GCSE in the subject. Enthusiastic and able groups of mostly girls have taken up this offer and although in the July 2000 examination the number of pupils gaining A* grades was below the national average, the results from the July 2001 examination have improved and the number of A*-C grades gained were in line with the national average. Pupils in these examination groups compose and perform accurately and expressively, and successfully communicate their intentions through dance. They work hard to develop their techniques and readily accept opportunities to practise, refine and consolidate their skills. Their ability to plan and choreograph is well developed alongside their ability to critically appraise their own and others' performance. Teaching is good, and on occasions is very good. Subject knowledge is good and much is expected of the pupils. Lessons are purposeful and well prepared, and content is well matched to pupils' interests and level of attainment, resulting in pupils being highly motivated and anxious to be involved in class activities. Teachers consistently demand high quality performance and good behaviour and usually these demands are met. Teachers have much enthusiasm for their subject and are able to pass this on to their pupils.
212. A significant contribution to pupils' awareness of cultural issues is made through Irish, Indian and African dance themes. The department arranges visits to the Deragate theatre in Northampton to witness professional dance productions. Visiting dance teachers, including visits by the Adzido African dance team, add a further dimension to the pupils' dance experience.
213. Dance benefits from clear leadership. Detailed course structures and schemes of work greatly assist in the delivery of the subject. Detailed and comprehensive records of pupils' attainment and achievement are kept, and are used to set targets for individual pupils. There are a range of opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities including performing in the college's art festival.
214. Facilities for the subject are not ideal, as the use of the assembly hall is a poor substitute for a well-equipped dance studio.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision for religious education is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Leadership gives very clear educational direction and shows commitment to improvement and success.
- Teaching is good with carefully planned lessons based on specialist knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils are managed and motivated very well so that they give high levels of concentration and intellectual effort.

Areas for improvement

The subject does not meet statutory requirements:

- by not giving pupils enough time in Years 10 and 11;
- by not making any provision for students in the sixth form.

215. Provision for pupils in Years 7-9 is good. Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is poor because the college does not give enough time for pupils to learn the content required by the agreed syllabus. Students in the sixth form are not taught religious education and so their attainment is far below expectation. There are no examination results on which to report because the college does not provide courses in religious studies at either GCSE or A level.
216. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show that by the end of Year 9 pupils have achieved well and reached a higher standard than expected. Pupils know the teachings and practices of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. They understand the beliefs and values of these religions. What they have learned they relate to their own experience of life. They know the death rituals of different religions and use them to express their own views about the origin and purpose of human life. What they are less sure about are the features that religions have in common and, although they speak and write with confidence, they rarely do so at length. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study moral issues but within the time available only two topics are possible. Achievement in these topics is very good but attainment by the end of Year 11 is well below expectation because most of the programme of study is not taught.
217. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are never less than satisfactory, are mostly good and are sometimes very good or excellent. Lessons are planned carefully and show that teachers have a thorough grasp of both content and process based on specialist knowledge and understanding. A particular strength is the way in which pupils are managed and motivated so that they give high levels of concentration and intellectual effort. In most lessons pupils practise the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but they do not spend enough time on sustained speaking or writing. The development by pupils of self-knowledge, a strong feature in some lessons, was missing from others. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching promotes both independent and collaborative forms of learning, an effective strategy given the very limited time available.
218. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Behaviour is excellent. In the twelve lessons observed not a single example of misbehaviour occurred. Pupils showed maturity in class and their positive attitude was evident in their exercise books. Only in Year 10 was there a hint of negativity. A few pupils expressed resentment that the class had been removed from GCSE geography just two lessons after the beginning of the course. In Year 11 the response to the excellent teaching was unreservedly favourable.
219. Leadership and management are very good. The development plan and other documentation show clear vision about the future and the commitment to get there. The shortage of time for Years 10 and 11 and the absence of provision in the sixth form are defects beyond the control of those with responsibility at subject and departmental level. In other respects the priorities for development and improvement match those for the college as a whole. The scale of attainment adopted by the new Agreed Syllabus has been introduced and has become an effective means by which pupils' performance is measured and reported to parents. This important innovation offers a secure foundation for further development. Inclusion in the college's statistics would allow comparison with other subjects. The information could also be used to set individual targets for pupils, to evaluate teaching, to guide curricular planning and to identify trends over time.

220. Since the last inspection the college has not moved towards compliance with the statutory requirement to provide religious education in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus but the previous report failed to identify the non-compliance as a key issue. The college's development plan recognises the need for a substantial review of the curriculum. Compliance with the law will have staffing implications and will require a greater commitment to the value of religious education.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

Overall, quality of provision in business education is good.

Strengths

- Consistent, good quality teaching, which creates effective learning.
- High standards of achievement in 2001.
- Helpful and constructive evaluation of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Targets on individual education plans are not well used in the classroom.
- Targets on individual education plans are not used to inform planning.
- Lack of opportunities for independent study.

221. Standards of achievement in Years 10 and 11 are good. However, in recent years there has been a lack of consistency in the GCSE results. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A-C was well above the national average, in 2000 they were below and in 2001 they rose again. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' achievement in business education is above national expectations. Staffing changes and inconsistencies of staff cover in these years have contributed to these imbalanced results. The standards reached by the recent Years 10 and 11, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are good for both boys and girls, as are the standards of those from minority ethnic groups. Less consistent are the standards of those with special educational needs, as their individual learning needs are not always addressed within the lesson. There is however, a general emphasis within the department on the need to set and achieve high standards for all pupils in this subject. Pupils are generally working at full stretch and achieving well. Standards are not only high for pupils in business education in relation to national expectations, but also pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.
222. The quality of teaching for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. For the pupils following a GCSE course the teacher plans effectively and sets clear objectives that pupils understand. Pupils are challenged and inspired well and all pupils are managed well. However, greater use could be made of individual education plans to support the learning of those pupils on the special educational needs register at both 'college action' and 'college action plus', and targets could be better used to inform future planning. All pupils do benefit from thorough, evaluative marking of their work which clearly shows pupils where they are going wrong and what they need to do to improve their writing and extend their knowledge. Pupils in both Years 10 and 11 exhibit a good grasp of basic business concepts and principles and use terms such as 'sole trader', 'private' and 'public sectors', and 'fixed assets' with confidence and authority.
223. Leadership and management of the department are good. The new management of the department is clearly focused on raising standards. Pupils are made aware of the need to raise their personal standards and the quality of teaching currently ensures that all are striving to meet the same end. There is a clear rationale of the educational aims and objectives for those following GCSE programmes of study.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS-level courses

| Subject | Number entered | per cent gaining grades A-E | | per cent gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | College | England | College | England | College | England |
| Mathematics | 1 | 100 | 63 | 100 | 17 | 5.00 | 1.56 |
| Chemistry | 1 | 100 | 47 | 0 | 6 | 2.0 | 0.87 |
| Art | 1 | 100 | 80 | 0 | 18 | 1.00 | 2.05 |

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

| Subject | Number entered | per cent gaining grades A-E | | per cent gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | College | England | College | England | College | England |
| Mathematics | 20 | 95 | 89 | 40 | 45 | 5.60 | 5.99 |
| Biology | 10 | 100 | 88 | 20 | 34 | 5.40 | 5.28 |
| Chemistry | 8 | 63 | 89 | 13 | 42 | 3.0 | 5.87 |
| Business education | 20 | 85 | 91 | 10 | 30 | 4.00 | 5.34 |
| Art | 4 | 100 | 96 | 50 | 45 | 7.0 | 6.42 |
| Geography | 7 | 86 | 92 | 14 | 37 | 3.71 | 5.73 |
| History | 6 | 100 | 89 | 17 | 34 | 5.33 | 5.43 |
| English | 13 | 100 | 96 | 46 | 36 | 6.00 | 5.90 |
| French | 3 | 100 | 91 | 67 | 39 | 6.67 | 5.74 |

Intermediate vocational qualifications

| Qualification | No in final year | per cent gaining qualification | | per cent gaining merit | | Average point distinction | |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| | | College | England | College | England | College | England |
| Business post-16 VQ | 5 | | | | | 6.00 | 10.78 |
| Science post-16 VQ | 2 | | | | | 12.00 | 10.26 |

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry, but physics and vocational science were also sampled. In physics, A-level examination results were above average in 2000 but the number of candidates was small and only boys studied physics. Results were close to those expected considering their GCSE results. In physics, students demonstrate good subject knowledge of concepts such as gravitational fields and damp vibrations. They handle numerical aspects of the subject with considerable confidence to solve complex problems. Provisional results in A-level examinations for 2001 are similar to those for 2000 and those for the new Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in science are in line with national averages.

Mathematics

Provision for mathematics is satisfactory. The inspection covered the A-level and AS-level courses offered by the college. Students cover modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. There is limited provision of one lesson per week for those pupils resitting GCSE mathematics. This lesson was not inspected. The teaching of application of number leading to the key skills qualification is at an early stage of development. A-level results in 2000 were in line with national averages and provisional results for 2001 indicate that A-level results are improving. Provisional A-level results in 2001 are well below those expected considering students' GCSE results.

Strengths

- Results in A-level mathematics have improved over a period of five years.
- There is a good match of teachers to the needs of the mathematics curriculum.
- The relationships between teachers and students are good. Students have confidence in their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Too many students were unsuccessful in the AS modules. As a result, the retention rate for A-level mathematics is poor.
- There are insufficient resources for students to support their independent study of mathematics.
- The monitoring of students' progress in mathematics in Year 12 is unsatisfactory.

224. Over three Years, A-level results in mathematics have risen, as have the numbers of students opting for the courses. The 2000 results were in line with the national average, while the A-level results in 2001 were above the national average. This presents satisfactory achievement given the students' starting points. The take-up of mathematics by female and male students is variable, and the results overall reflect their starting points. There are no significant differences between them. However, due to results in AS examinations being well below average, a significant number of students discontinued their studies at the end of Year 12 leaving a group of four boys in Year 13. Students made unsatisfactory progress and achieved little success mainly as a result of ineffective assessment of pupils' learning needs as well as the choice and organisation of the modules. Given the low entry criteria for mathematics, the lack of an appropriate induction course also contributed to students' lack of achievement. Many students retaking GCSE mathematics improved their results by at least one grade, in spite of the limited time available.

225. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' notebooks in the current Year 13 confirms unsatisfactory achievement. The overall quality of the students' oral and written work is below average. Written work was careless and reflected an emphasis on routine skills. Students' weak manipulative algebra skills hampered seriously their achievements in pure mathematics. Because of staff absence during the inspection, only one mechanics lesson was observed in this year group. In this lesson, teaching was directed at building students' confidence, and, as a result, they were all able to choose and apply formulae to simple kinematics problems.

226. Twenty-four students have begun courses in AS mathematics. However, these students are unevenly distributed between two option groups, one of twenty, and the other of four. There is a significant difference between the quality of the students' work in the two groups, but this is not related to the students' motivation. They work well together in unsupervised situations such as the absence of their teacher. Within the larger group, a significant proportion of students start from a base of intermediate GCSE mathematics. These students struggle with the early

stages of algebraic work in the pure mathematics module. Many find difficulty with algebraic long division, and a few are confused over the process, even in relation to number. ~~With~~ the smaller group, students make rapid progress in matching graphs of functions with their gradient functions. These students are able to make clear connections between their skills work in calculus and their earlier practical graph work.

227. Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent across the department. The best teaching is very carefully structured conceptually and gives careful thought to the development of students' thinking skills, as, for example, in a ~~less~~ on differential calculus. However, much of the teaching focuses on mechanical skills rather than on understanding. It is not always planned to take account of students' previous knowledge. In the larger Year 12 group, the pace is sometimes slow and ~~students~~ become easily distracted when teaching focuses on individuals. Only rarely do students pursue areas of mathematics outside that of the classroom. Individual research and learning are hampered by a too narrow range of resources relating to mathematics, and a shortage of text books. The marking of the students' work does not always contain sufficient detail to help students see how they can improve. In the key skills session observed, the single Year 13 student was working purposely on a useful diagnostic computer package from one of the major awarding bodies. This enabled the student to diagnose his own strengths and weaknesses.
228. The management of the changes to the mathematics curriculum has been unsatisfactory. Although teachers in the department work well together and have the confidence of their students, they lack guidance in their interpretation of the examination specifications. Monitoring of the students' work in the A-level modules was unsatisfactory so that students' learning needs were ~~not~~ clearly identified. As a result, of the eighteen students who began advanced courses in mathematics in Year 12, only three remain. However, the department did well for its final year students, achieving above average A-level results.

Biology

The provision for biology overall is good.

Strengths

- Results are above the national average with 100 per cent success at grades E-A
- Teaching overall is good.
- Student files are well organised.
- Subject specification content is rigorously followed.
- Relationships at all levels are very good.

Areas for improvement

- A wider range of teaching strategies could be employed.
- Students should be encouraged and given greater opportunity to develop independent learning skills.
- Reports should be targeted more accurately towards specific aspects of biology as well as student approaches to the subject.
- A better balance between theory and practical work is needed.

229. A-level results in 2000 were in line with national averages and all students gained a pass grade A-E. While these results were not as good as those in 1999, provisional results for the 2001 examinations showed significant improvement, particularly in the higher grades A and B. There is a consistent record of 100 per cent A-E grade achievement. The average point score per pupil shows a decreasing trend over the last three years. This could be linked to the change to a modular course, adopted due to pressures in college from students who were following modular courses in other subjects. It could also be due to the ability range of students allowed entry to the course, some of whom have studied science only to foundation level at GCSE. Provisional A-level results in 2001 are in line with results expected in comparison with students' GCSE grades. Nevertheless eight students discontinued their biology studies at the end of Year 12.
230. The standards of achievement of current students in Year 13 are good. Files are meticulously organised and show the full range of the subject specification. Students show good recall of DNA, discussing nucleotides and the significance of meiosis and mitosis to organisms. Coursework assessed practical work was evident, and was of an appropriate standard, but routine practical work was less frequent than is usually found and of a less challenging nature.

231. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Their work shows logical progression. They showed a developing understanding of cell ultrastructure; a student readily recalling the function of the lysosome and others identifying the golgi apparatus from diagrams.
232. Teaching is good overall. However, very good, good and satisfactory teaching was evident. Where teaching was very good, pace was appropriate and brisk, the lesson well planned so that early parts of the lesson were used as a foundation for later work. Board work and explanations were clear and concise. Where teaching was satisfactory, planning was good, the lesson plan was followed, teacher knowledge was good and content accurate and appropriate for the topic. In some lessons, there was however a slowed pace, a lack of flair and inspiration in delivery and a need to give greater thought to pupil activity.
233. Written work demanded of students consists of rewriting class notes with supplements made from additional reading. Providing students with the subject specification details for each topic coupled with good marking, including feedback to students on file contents, produces files of high quality. End of topic tests are set and homework consisting of past short answer questions are also provided and marked effectively. Coursework is marked thoroughly and good use is made of redrafting. The department makes regular use of registers and personal record cards for students, recording homework and test marks. Attendance registers are taken each lesson.
234. Students learn well. They are attentive and show a willingness to learn, seeking clarification of their understanding by asking thoughtful questions, for example, about limiting factors in photosynthesis or volunteering names of cell components. Relationships in the classrooms are good. The atmosphere being relaxed, friendly and supportive. In Year 12 there was some lack of confidence in offering answers that proved to be correct when given.
235. There is little evidence of students' independent work or individual research, for example, in the form of presentation notes or extended writing. There is a need to encourage students to become more responsible for their own learning, to make greater contributions to the learning of the group and to investigate a wider range of sources of information.
236. The overall good standard of teaching and learning in the department result from careful organisation and planning by the head of department. Great care is taken to ensure that the subject specifications are fully met and that support materials are available. The OCR subject specification is the basis of the scheme of work. Subject reports identify positive achievements, areas of concern and targets. These are completed with an emphasis on attitudes to work and effort. There is little reference to what it is that students do, or do not, know and exactly what it is that they should do to improve.

Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Higher-attaining students have a sound grasp of concepts and apply them well.
- Pupils work well together and with their teachers.
- Day-to-day marking is thorough.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in chemistry and organic chemistry in particular.
- Insufficient opportunity is provided for individual learning.

237. Chemistry results in 2000 were well below average. They were also well below those expected when compared with students' GCSE results. Provisional results in the 2001 examinations show that, even though they were still below average, there was some improvement in the AS level and A-level examinations. The number of candidates in both years was small.
238. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were well below average and showed a decrease in performance from the results of 1999 when results were above average. However, only one pupil failed to gain a pass grade. Overall, results in AS-level and A-level examinations in 2001 showed some improvement, although results for boys were still well below average. The number of A-level candidates, however, was again small and included only one girl. During the

past three years, whilst overall results were below average, girls' results were above average and those of the boys well below average.

239. The current standards of students, at the early stages of their course in Year 12, are average. Higher-attaining students are achieving at least as much as expected and show some good understanding of mass spectrometry and the relationship between pressure, volume and temperature for ideal gases. Lower-attaining pupils, however, some of whom have only studied science up to foundation level at GCSE, are very uncertain about how the spectrometer works and find difficulty in understanding ideal gas relationships. Even though most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of basic atomic structure, a significant minority experiences difficulty in understanding more advanced concepts.
240. In Year 13, students achieve satisfactorily overall. However, the overall performances of students at AS-level in 2001 were well below that expected considering their GCSE grades, particularly in organic chemistry. As a result a significant proportion of students discontinued their studies at the end of Year 12. Students in Year 13 demonstrate a good understanding of basic concepts in all branches of chemistry. For example, they have a good grasp of the dissociation of weak acids and can carry out calculations concerning pH. Higher-attaining students show a good understanding of the reaction leading to the synthesis of aspirin. Slower learners understand the process, but are less confident in explaining the mechanism of the reaction.
241. Overall, the teaching of chemistry is satisfactory with some examples of good practice. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this is used well in their questioning, explanations and the tasks they set. However, teaching in a few lessons is unimaginative and too teacher dominated. In these, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to extend individual learning. For example, in two lessons observed, teachers gave information to students rather than provided the opportunities for them to discuss ideas and learn from other sources. These lessons were not stimulating and did not result in secure learning, particularly for slower learners. This is an area for improvement.
242. Homework is set which extends classwork and often takes the form of structured questions. Day-to-day marking is thorough and comments on students' work often indicate how they can improve their work.
243. Students learn well. They respond well to challenge, work hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part of their learning. Lower-attaining students are less confident and do not always enter into classroom question and answer sessions. When given the opportunity to do so, students undertake independent work maturely. Most can extract information and make their own notes on, for example, the mechanisms of reactions. Some are less confident and need additional support.
244. Leadership in chemistry is satisfactory. There is a commitment to improvement. A new scheme of work, reflecting new subject requirements, provides a consistent approach to the teaching of chemistry and identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning. A good range of learning support materials is being developed, but more attention needs to be given to the use of ICT both as a teaching and learning tool. Target setting, based on analysis of students' performance in tests, is planned but has yet to be implemented.
245. The science department has, overall, made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The use of assessment has improved, the department now evaluates its targets and the departmental development plan takes the cost of development into account. With the improved use of information and communications technology, improved development planning and an improvement in technical support, the capacity for departmental improvement is good.

Business education

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Significant improvement in standards of achievement in 2001.
- Improved retention and completion rates on vocational courses in 2001.
- Teachers exhibit secure knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and verification of evidence lacks consistency.
- Programmes of Study are not matched to students' individual learning needs.
- Lack of emphasis on independent study.

246. Standards in business education improved in 2001 halting the decline in recent years. In previous years, the GCE Alevel examination results had been well below the national average both in terms of A-E grades and in the higher grades of A and B. However, in 2001, all candidates gained AE grades, and there was improved A and B grades, although A/B grades are still below the national average. The decline had occurred at a time of staffing changes and the improvements correlate with the appointment of a new head of department.
247. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are average for both male and female students and for those from minority ethnic groups as well as for students with special educational needs. When account is taken of the students' GCSE grades at the start of the course, this represents satisfactory achievement. Students make good progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, and have satisfactory understanding of the economic environment in which business operates. However, they are less adept at applying their understanding, and the skills of analysis and evaluation have significant weighting for the new A2 paper that students will be taking in the summer. In both Years 12 and 13 there are deficiencies in the students' analytical skills and these are needed to reach the highest grades.
248. Students who took the new AS level qualification at the end of Year 12 achieved well. A quarter of all the candidates achieved at the higher levels of grades A and B, and only one candidate did not get an AE grade. It proved to be a popular course and many of these students have chosen to take the subject onto A2 level. The standards of current students are variable, depending on whether or not they have previously studied business at GCSE level, as at the time of the inspection students were only three weeks into the course. Those who had taken GCSE business are coping well with the demands of AS, but for some of the other students there is a lack of understanding of business principles as they struggle to fully understand such basic concepts as supply and demand, and the application of factors which affect both demand and supply in different markets. However, all students observed were attempting to work well.
249. On the advanced vocational course there has been a significant fall in the number of candidates in the past three years, with only four students currently completing the programme of study in Year 13 and none choosing this course in the current year 12. Whilst retention of students as well as completion of the full award and average points score has been rising during the comparative period, this is still below the national average. No students have achieved at distinction level in recent years but at least a greater proportion is actually completing the full award and in 2001 two students did gain a merit. The standards of current students are average and below average. In the light of their previous GCSE results, this represents satisfactory achievement for some and unsatisfactory for others, the demands of the AVCE course being too great for students who have the bare minimum of five C grades at GCSE. Consequently these students are struggling to apply the knowledge that they are acquiring - for example, in the interpretation and analysis of data.
250. Overall, the quality of the teaching on the GCE A2 and AS courses is satisfactory. The teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Students generally work well, and in the best lessons the lesson objectives are clearly outlined at the beginning of the lesson and students know what they are meant to do and learn effectively. Subject content is accurate and is planned and presented clearly. Working methods are generally suitable for the task and enable students to make sufficient progress. However, whilst students are managed well, their individual learning needs are not

always fully recognised. The learning needs of the middle and lower attaining students– as well as those with special educational needs are currently not met fully, and they lack access to learning resources that are appropriate for independent study. For all students there is a lack of appropriate emphasis on independent study and activities, which allow students to apply and extend their learning.

251. In the AVCE course the teaching is only just satisfactory. Whilst teachers have a strong, secure subject knowledge, they do not inspire or challenge these students. They do not use a sufficient variety of methods to stimulate the full spectrum of learning skills. As a result of this, students in Year 13, lack the capacity to make accurate and productive critical evaluations of their work. They have not developed the necessary skills to plan their time effectively and as a result of this assignments that should have been completed in Year 12 are still not completed. Current evidence, viewed during the inspection, does not show evidence of high quality independent research or extended study and thinking. There is also a lack of consistency of the assessment of vocational evidence. The college's internal verification system has not ensured that all assessors meet accurately the requirements of the awarding body.
252. The department now benefits from good leadership. The recently appointed head of department has set about ensuring clear educational direction and is aware of the need to promote high standards. Staff absence and changeover contributed to the fall in standards; and the new management of the department has provided a more focused sense of direction. Changes have recently been made to the choice of option modules and the structure of assessment and the January examination has been removed for AS students. These changes are already having an impact on standards observed. There is still a need, however, for more careful monitoring of the department's work to extend the teaching strategies required to develop the students' analytical skills. The department is however, well placed to make further progress.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Provision is satisfactory. Results were above average in 2000. Provisional results in 2001 showed a decline at A-level and girls outperformed boys. The AS-level course needs further development. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with good teaching at A-level.

Strengths

- ICT is used very well and students integrate ICT effectively when developing ideas.
- Provision for gifted and talented students is good and the most talented produce innovative and exciting work.
- Assessment is thorough and students receive helpful feedback.
- The subject supports the development of students' research skills and independent study.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys is generally lower than that of girls.
- Further development is needed to improve the AS course and thus raise standards.
- Some students would benefit from a more vocational course than that offered by AS A-level,

253. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were above the national average. Boys and girls performed equally well, with half of those entered gaining the highest grades, A and B. The one student who was entered at AS-level achieved an E grade. The point scores gained by students over the three years from 1998 to 2000 were below the national average, with girls outperforming boys. Provisional results in 2001 showed an overall decline in the number of students gaining A and B grades. Girls' results at A and B improved slightly on those of the previous year, but boys' results were significantly weaker. Out of four boys entered, only one gained an A or B grade, the remainder was awarded E grades. Ten students completed the new AS course, from 11 who joined the course at the beginning of Year 12. Four students gained the highest grades, A and B, but the remainder were awarded mainly E grades and the work of one was unclassified.

254. High attaining students achieve well at AS and very well at A-level. The achievement of lower attaining students is satisfactory but some students could probably benefit more from a vocationally oriented course. Girls' attainment is generally better than that of boys and the former tend to be more talented; on occasion, a talented boy has done well.
255. In Year 12, the work of talented students shows good development, for example, a series of drawings in pencil and colour leads on to a number of photographs focusing in detail on different aspects of the subject. The best tonal work and experimental studies are competent, with good manipulation of imagery. Much work in tonal drawing and colour, as well as in recording from observation, is technically uncertain at the beginning of the course, as evidenced by the work of current students and that of last year's AS course. The work of higher attaining students later in the year shows improved drawing skills. Other students' work does not show the required technical development or depth of personal investigation as they move through the course. Students' personal studies of a chosen artist consist of factual accounts closely linked to secondary source material; they do not include much analysis of individual pieces of work or convey the students' own reaction to the artist's style. Lower attaining students produce brief personal studies and their practical work shows limited development.
256. In Year 13, there is considerable variation in the standard of work produced. Students make satisfactory use of the work of other artists as a stimulus for practical work and some use what they learn about artists' techniques to improve their own technical skills. Gifted and talented students engage in more thorough exploration of a chosen artist's work in their personal studies and, from this enquiry, develop their own ideas and skill to produce exciting and innovative outcomes. The best work, for example, in a textiles project by a student from last year, shows exceptional knowledge and understanding of ideas, materials and processes. Students produce some very good work in three dimensions, although supporting studies are not always as well finished as they might be. All students make very good use of ICT and are able to distort imagery and generally experiment to very good effect; ICT is well integrated within their projects.
257. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with good teaching at A-level. The standard of work in the AS course reflects some weaknesses in the development of skills lower down the college, as well as indicating possible developments in teaching within the course itself.
258. Teaching in the sixth form is effective for gifted and talented students, providing a good level of guidance, support and advice so that students are able to engage in very effective personal investigations. Teachers' own knowledge is used to very good effect with these students. Where students are less able, teachers have still to arrive at an entirely effective strategy to deepen their response and sharpen their technical skills.
259. In the two lessons seen, teaching was good and tasks offered appropriate challenge. Expectations were clearly explained and teachers made good use of work by previous students to demonstrate what students should be concerned with. Support to individuals encouraged them and went some way towards improving their technical skills and understanding. Innovative use of words ('twist', 'layer', 'weave', 'pierce') showed flair and provided very good opportunities for talented students to respond creatively in materials of their choice. With a but the most gifted students, teachers have to work hard in an attempt to move students from a fairly uninspired level where motivation is quite low towards a point where they are imaginative and have high expectations for themselves.
260. Currently, students in Year 12 are fairly dependent on teacher support and direction and work rather slowly. However, by the time they reach Year 13, students generally show greater maturity; all students by this time are prepared to research independently and to interpret information. Gifted and talented students show tremendous initiative and produce highly individualised work; they are clearly extremely absorbed and passionate about the subject. Lower attaining students do not take their research and personal exploration to sufficient depth or show very much awareness of what is expected to gain higher grades.
261. Leadership in the sixth form is satisfactory. There is good communication between the two teachers and both have good subject knowledge, including strong technical skills. The department is well resourced for students to work in a range of media, and opportunities in the use of ICT are very good. Assessment and recording are good and students receive helpful individual feedback. The subject supports the development of pupils' research skills, writing and independent study. Provision for personal development is good, especially in Year 13: gifted and talented students are guided to become involved deeply in individual exploration

and creativity in a way that has an impact on their spiritual development as well as extending their cultural awareness. Extracurricular opportunities are very good: a trip to Paris for Years 12 and 13 and visits to Tate Modern and the Turner Prize effectively support the development of students' skills, knowledge and understanding.

262. Curriculum planning is satisfactory with scope for further development to ensure the highest possible standards are reached. The curriculum is significantly better at A-level than at AS, as evidenced by the high quality work produced by gifted and talented students, but there is scope in Years 12 and 13 for developing the approach taken with lower attainers. The department is adjusting its approach to the new AS course; significant development is needed to raise standards. Improving the attainment of boys at A-level as well as AS is key to improving the colleges' overall results in the subject.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history, but work in A-level sociology was also sampled.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- High quality coursework assignments.
- Fieldwork a major strength.
- Good teaching, with varied approaches.
- Good atmosphere in class.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- More effort to recruit high attaining students.
- More challenge for gifted and talented students.

263. In 2000, standards attained at advanced level geography were well below the national average. However, the 2000 cohort was an unusually small group of only seven students, and was also a lower attaining group. In previous years and in 2001 the results were much better, and broadly in line with national averages. The department welcomes all students who have gained grade C in geography at GCSE. Several of these students are not among the highest attainers, but become a part of a cohort that achieves a near 100 per cent pass rate at A-level grades every year. Of the 14 students who started the AS course in 2000, two chose not to complete it, and one was not classified. Nine students gained C or D; one was graded E and one received an A grade. There is thus a broad spectrum of achievement.

264. Sixth form students' written work shows a good grasp of geographical processes and of environmental issues. The major coursework assignments show good individual initiative in researching a chosen topic in depth, and in presenting their findings clearly and effectively, with good understanding and use of numeracy and information technology where appropriate. Fieldwork is a major strength of the sixth form provision in geography. Very good photographic displays in the classrooms and corridors indicate a wide variety of valuable activities and experiences.

265. During the inspection the maximum possible visits were made to sixth form geography lessons. A total of one full lesson and three half lessons was all that could be seen. All lessons seen were in the fourth week of the college year. All the geography teaching seen in the sixth form was good, and one lesson was very good. All the four geography teachers are fully involved in sixth form teaching. They use a variety of approaches: there is no monotony or boredom in these lessons. The teachers expect a high level of commitment, and the students respond well to this challenge. Teachers' planning is very good and all the time available is well used.

266. In the lessons seen, the new AS students in Year 12 showed clear ability to grasp concepts and to challenge their teacher with alternative hypotheses. The level of work on cliff erosion

and slumping extended and challenged sufficiently students' thinking. These students demonstrated a good use of a complex graph to interpret successfully the relationship between a rainstorm and increased river discharge.

267. The Year 13 students had gained recently success in their AS geography, and were planning effectively individual research projects, using successfully secondary data on a variety of relevant and challenging topics, including overuse of national parks, AIDS, and the effects of foot-and-mouth disease. This was an impressive example of the curriculum reflecting the latest news. In their study of earthquakes, students focus sharply on the exact assessment criteria of a typical examination question.
268. The students' response to their teaching is good. There is a willingness to participate and to challenge the teacher that is not always encountered in sixth form lessons. Discussion with the students indicated very high levels of satisfaction both with their choice of geography as a subject to study, and of their experience on the course so far. The fieldwork was particularly praised warmly by Year 13 students and Year 12 students were looking forward to this experience.
269. The leadership is very good in the whole geography department, and the sixth form is a priority area for all the staff. Resources are generally good, and the staff have worked hard to build up good resources for practical fieldwork. The library supports the department well, and is well used by the students. The accommodation is satisfactory.
270. Since the last inspection, the increase of fulltime geography staff from one to four teachers has had a very beneficial effect on sixth form teaching. There is growing recognition of a greater need to focus on recruiting from among the most gifted and talented students, and from then on challenging them more. There are no significant areas of weakness to report.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good

Strengths

- The quality of teaching, coupled with the very good subject knowledge of the teachers ensures that students are challenged to think deeply and that they receive the utmost support in their search for the truth.
- The marking of students' essays is of a very high standard: teachers give students helpful advice on how to improve their writing.
- The new scheme of work helps teachers plan lessons effectively and in detail.
- The subject is managed well and teachers work hard to ensure that their students receive resources, which foster discussion and debate.

Areas for improvement

- Results in the A-level examinations have been well below average for the last three years.
- More textbooks are needed for the courses in both years.

271. Students' performance in A-level examinations from 1997 to 2000 was well below average. However, A-level results in 2001 were better and two students attained A and B grades. Similarly, results in the Advanced Subsidiary examinations were encouraging, half the students entered attained B and C grades and two students received 10 marks for the coursework element. At both A-level and AS-level, boys outperformed girls and, in the A-level examination, gained higher marks on both papers. The numbers opting to study history in the sixth form have risen over the past two years, but prior attainment is generally only average.
272. Standards of work seen during the inspection, mainly because of good teaching and a new scheme of work, which emphasises the acquisition of higher order historical skills, were better than examination results indicate. From an average baseline, students are making good progress and their achievement is at least satisfactory. Students, particularly in Year 13, are able to ask quite perceptive questions of their teachers and they demonstrate good knowledge of Mussolini's domestic policy and of the key features of Fascist propaganda. They are articulate and can discuss the impact of a variety of forms of propaganda on different sections of the community. Students in Year 12 find the use of correct terminology difficult and they lack some basic historical knowledge, which hampers their efforts. However, with full support from their teachers, they are able to make accurate comments on the roles of the Reds and

the Whites during the Bolshevik Civil Wars. In addition they are becoming more adept at selecting important information from texts and can now compare the constitution of the Weimar Republic with, not only the British system of government, but also with that of the German Government during the First World War

273. Students are generally quite adept at the analysis and interpretation of source material and give convincing arguments about its validity and usefulness to historians. Furthermore, they can make perceptive comments on the significance of a variety of contemporary sources to a study of the workings of the parliament of Mary Tudor. Students enjoy historical debate and are not afraid to challenge the views of their teachers, nor of their fellow students. The quality of essays written by students in Year 11 is high: they see the importance of an introduction to set the scene, they give both sides of the argument and come to their own conclusions after due consideration of the evidence available to them.
274. A major strength of the department is the high quality of teaching, which both challenges and supports. During the inspection all teaching was at least good, and in 25 per cent of lessons it was very good. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which their students learn and they work hard to use methods and provide them with resources which meet their needs. A particularly impressive feature is the emphasis which teachers place on a continuity of approach from Year 11 into Year 12. They know that the change to sixth form study can be traumatic for many students and they therefore attempt to ease their pupils into research and further reading. The expectation of what students can do is high, and students respond with high levels of industry and a mature approach to their studies. Moreover, because teachers use subject terminology naturally and extensively and because they ensure high levels of intellectual challenge, students are demonstrating good progress in their depth of thinking and in their willingness to debate. Furthermore, students are increasingly more critical of the sources available to them and objectivity is becoming second nature. In an A level lesson on parliament during Mary Tudor's reign, for example, the quality of student comment on quite complex material written by Sir Thomas More and also by Sir Thomas Smith, was of a very high standard and demonstrated the progress which students had made since their GCSE studies.
275. In addition to impressive knowledge of their subjects, teachers have good relations with their students and treat them as responsible adults. Teachers and students greet each other warmly at the beginnings of lessons, speak highly of each other, and there is much smiling during the sessions. Particularly impressive is the fact that students are happy when others succeed: they praise the contributions of their peers and are happy to learn from them. In summary, students are pleasant, polite, engaging and forthcoming.
276. Teachers know their students well, are aware of their strengths and of their weaknesses, and are skilled at asking just the right questions, in order to prompt thought and to check on progress. The quality of advice on how to improve further is of a high order and essays are marked to a very good standard. Teachers place emphasis on efficient note taking and check students' files regularly. Concerned to prepare students for the rigour of higher study, teachers offer regular revision sessions and spend considerable time assisting pupils with essay planning.
277. Improvements in teaching and also in students' attainment are the result of good departmental management. The head of department works well with her colleagues and they share a vision for the effective teaching of advanced history. The new scheme of work is instrumental in ensuring that students are provided with opportunities to develop their historical skills further and it recognises that students learn in different ways. Teachers work hard to provide relevant resources for their students but are hampered somewhat by the lack of textbooks. Nevertheless, the library is well stocked with materials including GBOM titles and sixth form students were seen on every day of the inspection pursuing their own research into history topics. The department is well placed for future development in sixth form history.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

Overall provision for English is good.

Strengths

- A-level results in recent years have been above national averages.
- Good teaching with very good features, which promotes independent learning in which students undertake research and deliver well prepared papers in seminars.
- Very good use of assessment and monitoring to improve standards in the AS examinations.
- Very good leadership and teamwork.

Areas for improvement

- Active participation of the quieter students in seminars.
- Written work requires careful editing and some students need to give more in-depth analysis when conveying their response to a text.

278. Standards achieved in the 2000 A-level literature examination were above the national average in the number of students obtaining the higher grades, A to B. Results were below the national average in 1999, when a small number of students were entered for the literature examination. However, over the last two years, results have been well above average and there is sustained improvement. There was a slight dip in the number of students gaining grades A to B in the 2001 results, but overall, the average points score was not significantly different from the year before.
279. In the new and first AS examination taken by students in 2000, 88 per cent gained a pass grade and one third obtained the highest grade, grade A. Whilst students produced work of good quality, marks in the contemporary novel were poor for some of the most able students; however, in the resit, all passed with vastly improved grades all gained grade D and above. The department does well for its A-level students and many do better than expected given the average standards of students when they enter the college. The take up of English is lower by male students, but their results overall are good. In recent years, the number of students choosing to study English literature is increasing.
280. The standard of work seen in students' folders and in lessons confirms the good quality teaching and students' understanding and appreciation of textual grasp. Speaking and listening skills are very good especially for the most able students. Most display a range of good discussion skills as they discuss, argue and defend their viewpoints. They evaluate each other's response and make perceptive comments partly to get a reaction as well as to debate their views. Overall, they communicate their ideas fluently and confidently and know how to construct a well argued case as seen in the Year 13 seminar when they delivered their critical reviews on *The Great Gatsby*. In this seminar, they made thought provoking contributions showing a thorough preparation of their papers to discuss their personal response. In particular, the most able students confidently explored their ideas in role as critical judges. Some of the quieter students are passive recipients of the very useful discussions that take place in Years 12 and 13.
281. Attainment in reading in both Years 12 and 13 is good. All students make very good progress in analysing and offering alternative interpretations to a text. They can confidently explore the use of language and style to demonstrate their understanding of writers' use of language to express meanings. Their reviews of Walker's *The Color Purple* and Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, showed a good understanding of using the background information on both novels to explore the themes as they relate to the women protagonists. All students develop a wide range of research skills; they use extensive notes and draw on their wide reading and vocabulary when analysing texts. Their files and oral response to literary texts show a good grounding in literary criticism. Overall, essays are well structured, expression is clear and most write succinctly: the most able confidently develop their ideas as they select and use words carefully to have the maximum effect when analysing texts. There are occasional minor spelling errors. Whilst some average attaining students give answers that are relevant to questions, their analyses lack the depth required to achieve the higher grades.
282. Students have excellent attitudes to their work. There is a high level of application and they demonstrate good tenacity when discussing their work. They work quickly and efficiently with maturity and confidence as seen when they engaged in role play to explore Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*. Students' files show that they accept responsibility for their learning.
283. The sixth form teaching is consistently good. All lessons are well planned and in some lessons, good use is made of examination and assessment criteria when sharing the objectives with students. Teachers engage students in their work through skilful questioning and timely

interventions and exposition. For example, the use of probing questions and video film in a Year 12 lesson helped students to critically appraise Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*. Teachers make good use of seminars, which they use to increase students' independent learning skills, review their knowledge of texts and extend their response. They pass on their subject expertise and challenge students to think intellectually. They contribute to students' learning, maintaining a sharp focus on analysing texts critically by giving and pointing them to a wealth of background information and literary criticism. In turn, this approach helps students to become autonomous readers able to construct and present their own interpretation. They give students the opportunities to make and share extensive notes. Lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers use the assessment criteria stringently to mark work so that students know how to improve their work.

284. The English department is well managed. Teachers undertake critical reviews of students' work to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. As such, monitoring of learning is good. Teachers work together as a team and provide students with good advice about structuring their work under examination conditions. They provide interesting extra-curricular experience for students in preparation for sections of the A-level course. The process of setting assignments encourages good independent learning, as students are required to put forward and defend their suggested essay titles before they are accepted. The achievements of students in English are a strength of the sixth form A-level course.

French

The focus of the inspection was on French, although German is also taught in the sixth form. The numbers of students entered for A-level examinations in German in recent years have been small: in 1999, six candidates of whom four gained A-E grades, and in 2000 four candidates of whom three gained A-E grades. Provisional figures for 2001 indicate above average results with three of the seven candidates gaining AB grades.

Overall, the quality of provision for French is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Use of ICT to improve language skills.
- The provision of valuable work experience abroad.

Areas for improvement

- Recruitment of students on to sixth form courses.
- Students' speaking skills.
- Assessment of individuals' needs and opportunities to work independently.

285. Over the last three years, the numbers of students entered for A-level French have been small. Results of the two candidates in 1999 were in line with the national average; in 2000, results of the three candidates were above the national average; and in 2001 there were no candidates in A-level French, even though the GCSE results had been good two years earlier.
286. Of the 21 students who embarked on the A-level course in September 2000, 14 completed the course. Provisional results are unsatisfactory, with one-B grade and five students failing to gain A-E grades.
287. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below expectations in Year 13. Understanding of both written and spoken French is satisfactory. Students understand the gist of French spoken at normal speed but some important details are not caught. They read texts from a wide range of sources and again demonstrate understanding of the gist, but insecure knowledge of vocabulary leads to difficulties in understanding the detail. Structured writing on matters such as business correspondence is more accurate than "free" writing on topics of general interest such as the Euro. There is evidence of progress having been made during their first year of sixth form studies, but students' competence in handling more complex structures is still below average. Extended writing betrays basic grammatical weaknesses in gender, adjectival agreement, subject-verb agreements and the use of tenses. There is increasing confidence in reporting everyday events, but there are abundant errors in expressing opinions and in writing about abstract topics. In speaking, students lack confidence. They have hesitant recall of appropriate vocabulary, even in general conversation about themselves. Knowledge of tenses is insecure. Pronunciation is mostly reasonable, but there is no spontaneity or fluency.

288. Students in Year 12 are less than a month into their sixth form course. They are coming to terms with having to read longer, more complex texts and with having to strengthen their understanding of grammar. The written work completed so far reveals weaknesses in their knowledge of verb endings and agreements. Like the students in Year 13, they lack confidence in speaking French. Pronunciation levels are generally good, and they use information and communications technology to help them improve their oral skills.
289. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Extensive use of French by teachers with a high degree of competence in the language (some are native speakers) sets a strong challenge to students and contributes to the development of their listening comprehension. Good use is made of the excellent, recently installed ICT facilities to help develop students' pronunciation and intonation. However, in some lessons the pace is slow and there is a lack of pressure to make the students work as hard as they could. There is insufficient emphasis on the students' use of French. There is no insistence that French should always be the normal means of communication for all talk in the classroom. Consequently, speaking skills remain underdeveloped.
290. Students enjoy their work and want to succeed. They acknowledge the value of the work experience in France, which is arranged for them. They appreciate the support, which they are given. However, they do not have a clear understanding of the level they are working at. No targets in terms of grades have been set for them to reach. The establishment of procedures to provide more specific information and guidance to students throughout their sixth form courses, together with modification of schemes of work to suit individual needs would help to raise standards.