

INSPECTION REPORT

STOKE DAMEREL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Plymouth

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113547

Acting Principal: Mrs C Hannaford

Reporting inspector: Mr R Palmer
31198

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th March 2002

Inspection number: 193812

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Somerset Place Stoke Plymouth
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev G Cryer
Date of previous inspection:	28th April 1997

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31198	R Palmer	Registered inspector	Provision for students in the sixth form	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13395	J Illingworth	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30690	G Allison	Team inspector	Geography	
16038	J Bavin	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs	
20729	J Berry	Team inspector	Science Chemistry	
7926	J Bowden	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs	
3534	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
12499	M Durkin	Team inspector	Drama (sixth form)	
4773	P Gilliat	Team inspector	Religious education History (sixth form)	

10727	R Humphries	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)	
23188	V Maunder	Team inspector	Science Biology	
31986	B Medhurst	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Mathematics (sixth form)	
4757	D Morris	Team inspector	Art and design	
12276	T Payne	Team inspector	Music	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English Provision for students with English as an additional language	
30282	S Richardson	Team inspector	Modern languages	
31191	D Sylph	Team inspector	History	
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics Physics (sixth form)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stoke Damerel Community College is a co-educational, comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18 years. It is located in an inner-city area of Plymouth. The college has 1409 students, (736 boys and 673 girls), compared with 1320 students at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. It is oversubscribed and is bigger than most secondary schools. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds that are below average overall. Many students live in areas of Plymouth that have high levels of social deprivation. The attainment of students on entry at age 11 is below average. Three local grammar schools attract many of the high attaining students in the area, especially girls. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals (nearly three in every 10 students) is above the national average. The proportion (about one in 40) of students who speak English as an additional language is a little higher than in most secondary schools. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English. Very few students are of non-white ethnic background. The proportion of students with special educational needs, about one in every five, is above average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs, about one in 40, is average. Of these, 10 attend the unit for visually impaired students. Most of the other statemented students have emotional and behavioural difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. A small number of traveller children are on the college's role.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The college provides a good quality of education that helps students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to achieve well. The achievement of students who have visual impairment is very good. Standards improve as students move through the college as a result of good teaching and very effective use of assessment to help students to learn at a good pace. Students attain better GCSE results than would be expected from their levels of attainment when they joined the college. Good and effective provision for the care of students promotes positive attitudes among the large majority of students. The good quality of leadership and management plays an important part in the college's continued improvement. Curricular provision is good. Students' social development is very good as a result of the success of the college's policy for the inclusion of all students. The college has many more strengths than shortcomings. It manages its resources particularly well, has maintained its good cost-effectiveness and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- GCSE results were above those of similar schools in 2001 and represented good achievement.
- Good leadership and the commitment of staff to raise standards help the college to improve.
- Good teaching, supported by a very good programme for the professional development of all staff, helps students to achieve well.
- Teachers make very good use of assessment to help students to improve their work.
- The social inclusion and social development of students are very successful features.
- Very good provision for visually impaired students helps them to make very good progress.

What could be improved

- Standards in religious education are unsatisfactory owing to shortcomings in the department's teaching, curriculum and management.
- Standards in music are unsatisfactory because of some poor teaching and insufficient resources.
- Below average skills in writing and spelling hinder students' progress in some subjects.
- The poor behaviour of a small number of students leads to under-achievement in a few classes.
- Unsatisfactory attendance restricts the achievement of a sizeable minority of students.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made good improvement since its previous inspection in 1997. It has maintained its previous strengths and built well upon them. GCSE results at grades A*-C have increased well and

indicate good achievement relative to students' prior attainment. The college met its suitably demanding targets for performance at GCSE examinations in 2001. In respect of the five key issues for action that were identified in the previous report, progress has been good. The use of the students' planners has improved and is now a good aid to learning. The quality of teaching has improved, is more consistent and is now good. The problems in respect of inappropriate timetabling and unsatisfactory deployment of teachers have been corrected. Although attendance has remained slightly below average, efforts to improve it are good. Finally, there is now a close and effective link between the planning in departments and the whole college's development plan. The college has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been below the national average. They are improving at the same rate as results are improving nationally and indicate satisfactory achievement when compared with students' below average attainment at the end of Year 6. In 2001, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in English and science. They were well below average in mathematics. Compared with the results attained by similar schools, they were above average in English and science and below average in mathematics. They indicate achievement that is good in science, satisfactory in English and unsatisfactory in mathematics. Girls' results overall were higher than those of boys in English. They were slightly below those of boys in mathematics and science. Currently, students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science; students are attaining standards that are similar to those attained in national tests recently. In most other subjects, the achievement of students of all levels of attainment, including students who have special educational needs, is better than expected from their previous attainment and is good. However, it is below expectations and unsatisfactory in music and religious education, mainly as a result of some inadequate teaching.

GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average but above the average for similar schools. They show that students of all capabilities and backgrounds achieved higher grades than expected from their levels of attainment when they entered the college. Results at grades A*-C were well above average in physical education, above average in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and drama, and below average in most other subjects. Over the past four years, the improvement in GCSE results, as measured by the average points scored per student, has been slightly below the national trend. However, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C has increased from one student in every four to almost two students out of every five in 2001. This good achievement is a consequence of good teaching and effective use of assessment to promote good learning. The poor attendance of a minority of students hinders the college's efforts to raise standards further. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work generally reflect the levels of attainment in GCSE examinations in 2001. They are average in science, art and design, design and technology, ICT and physical education. They are below average in other subjects and well below average in music. Students' achievement is currently good in science, design and technology, history, ICT and physical education and satisfactory in other subjects apart from music in which it is unsatisfactory. No work in religious education was observed in Years 10 and 11 and students do not receive their statutory entitlement to the subject. Students of all levels of attainment and backgrounds achieve well in most

subjects because they have positive attitudes to their work and receive good teaching and support. The college achieved its suitably challenging targets for performance in GCSE examinations in 2001.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most students have positive attitudes to learning, are keen and motivated and make good progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The large majority of students behave well in class and around the site. The poor behaviour of a minority impairs learning in some lessons, particularly in lower attaining groups.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students' personal development is good. Their good relationships with staff and with one another foster a positive climate for learning.
Attendance	Below average. Poor attendance by a minority of students causes them to achieve less than their potential.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The good quality of teaching is one of the college's strengths. It helps students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve well in most subjects. Teaching was satisfactory or better in almost 19 out of every 20 of the lessons observed. It was very good in a quarter of all lessons seen. In about one lesson out of every 20, teaching was less than satisfactory. In Years 7 to 11, teaching is good overall in English, mathematics and science. It is good in all other subjects of the National Curriculum apart from modern foreign languages and music in which it is satisfactory, though it is unsatisfactory in music in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 in art and design and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in religious education.

The strengths in teaching include teachers' good knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects and the very effective use they make of assessment to help students to improve their work. Students made good progress in most lessons observed because teachers planned lessons carefully to ensure that the work was of suitable difficulty and challenge for all students in the class, including those with special educational needs, the visually-impaired students and the few for whom English is an additional language. The teaching of the gifted and talented students is generally good. The good rapport between students and teachers assists learning. Most students achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work. Homework is used well to support students' learning in Years 10 and 11 but is of inconsistent quality and amount in Years 7 to 9.

Learning is good in most lessons because the good planning gets lessons off to a purposeful start. Students react positively to the good pace and the interesting series of tasks. They reinforce their understanding of the work in good discussions and reviews about what they have learned. They co-operate well with each other when working in pairs and groups. They have a very good knowledge of their progress and what they need to do to improve. Across subjects, teaching of the separate key skills of literacy, numeracy and of ICT is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum provides a balanced and appropriate range of courses apart from the lack of religious education in Years 10 and 11. Students enrich their learning through active participation in a very wide range of activities outside the classroom.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Very good provision for students with visual impairment helps them to maximise their progress. All students with special educational needs are fully included and play an active part in college life.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. These students receive effective support that enables them to make good progress and to achieve as well as the other students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Provision is very good for social development, good for cultural and moral development and satisfactory for spiritual development. Students acquire a good understanding of life in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. Very effective use of assessment data enhances students' academic and personal development. Students who experience difficulties in work, behaviour or attendance receive very good support.
How well the school works in partnership with parents.	Good. The good partnership between most parents and the college has a positive effect on students' learning. A small minority of parents do not sufficiently support the college's efforts to improve attendance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Leadership provides a very clear direction for improvement and sets suitably challenging targets for staff and students. Management in most subjects is good. Strategies to raise standards have improved the quality of teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors work closely with the college's staff. They are well informed, supportive, active and effective.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The college makes very effective use of data to assess how well it is doing. It constantly looks for improvements. Good systems are in place to monitor and evaluate standards, teaching, learning, behaviour and attendance.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial management is of a high standard. The college makes very effective use of its resources although there are deficiencies in the amount of resources and the quality of accommodation in a few subjects. It considers very carefully all its spending options when purchasing resources. Spending is related very closely to the college's educational priorities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are expected to work hard. • Students like college. • Teaching is good and students achieve well. • Leadership and management are good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework is inadequate in Years 7 to 9. • Behaviour is not good enough.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students become mature and responsible.• It is easy to discuss a problem with staff. | |
|---|--|

Inspectors agree with parents' views. They strongly support the positive views expressed by parents. They find that although the large majority of students behave well or very well in lessons and around the college, the poor behaviour of a small minority of students hinders learning in a few classes, particularly in low attaining groups. Accordingly, parents are correct in feeling that behaviour could be better. In respect of homework, this is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory, but of inconsistent amount and quality in Years 7 to 9. The college recognises the shortcomings in homework and behaviour and is working hard and appropriately to tackle them.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

STOKE DAMEREL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than the average size of sixth forms in England. It has 215 students (108 boys and 107 girls) on roll, including just under one third in Year 13. Numbers have increased from 180 students at the time of the previous inspection. The college joins with two other colleges in Plymouth to provide a confederated sixth form to enable courses that otherwise may not run to be viable. Very few students come from non-white heritage backgrounds. A very small number of students have a statement of special educational needs. Students choose to study from a good range of AS/A2-level courses, GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses, other vocational programmes and GCSE 'mature' courses in English, mathematics and science. Approximately two-thirds of the students stay on from Year 11. A few students from other schools join Year 12. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is twice the average for all sixth forms nationally. Each course of study has suitable requirements for entry. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average overall, including a large proportion that is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost-effective and provides a good quality of education for students of all backgrounds and capabilities. Standards are rising. In 2001, results at A-level, AS-level and vocational examinations matched the average results attained in all institutions that provide similar courses for post-16 students. These results indicated good achievement in relation to students' GCSE results. Improvement in provision for the sixth form since the previous inspection is good. The numbers of students have increased. Leadership and management are good. The quality of teaching is good and leads to good learning. However, in several subjects, students do not develop their skills of independent study well enough. Many students rely too much on the teacher. The unsatisfactory attendance of a few students hinders their progress. The college's active participation in the local confederation of sixth forms extends the range of courses available for study. Staff have a clear commitment to providing appropriate courses for each student based on the very good knowledge and understanding that teachers have of each individual. Students receive good advice and guidance prior to staying on. Consequently, the large majority of students complete their chosen courses.

Strengths

- Standards are rising as a result of good teaching, very effective use of assessment and students' positive attitudes to work.
- The confederation of three sixth forms works well to enable students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to study courses that suit their aspirations and needs.
- Good leadership and management present a clear direction for improvement.

What could be improved

- Students do not develop their skills of independent learning well enough.
- Provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements.
- Attendance of a few students is unsatisfactory and hinders their progress.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Students in Years 12 and 13 make good progress as a result of good teaching. A-level results in 2001 matched the national average but were slightly below expectations based on GCSE results.
Chemistry	Good. Students achieve well. They benefit from good and enthusiastic teaching, organisation and support provided within a well-run department. A-level results in 2001 were well above average.
Biology	Good. Teachers use their good knowledge and expertise in the subject to help students to improve their work. Students make insufficient use of ICT to support their learning. A-level results were well above average in 2001.
Physics	Satisfactory. Students' achievement matches expectations based on their earlier performance .in GCSE examinations. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and varies from very good to poor. A-level results in 2001 were well below average.
Design and technology	Good. Students in Years 12 and 13 benefit from very good teaching and are making good progress. A-level results in 2001 were below average.
ICT	Good. Students on the AVCE course make good progress. They have good skills in working independently and use a wide range of ICT skills well. Results in vocational courses were below average in 2001.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory when compared with their GCSE results. In 2001, A-level results matched the national average. Students have positive attitudes to their work.
Art and design	Good. Students make good progress as a result of good teaching. A-level results have improved and were well above average in 2001.
Drama	Satisfactory. Strategies to improve the achievement of boys have helped them to attain above average standards. The attainment of girls is below average. A-level results were below average in 2001.
Geography	Good. Standards are rising as a result of improved management. A wide variety of teaching methods, good marking and assessment help students in Year 12 to achieve well. A-level results were well below average in 2001 and below expectations based on GCSE results.
History	Good. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and close monitoring of their work. They do not develop sufficiently their skills of working independently. A-level results in 2001 were above average.
English literature	Satisfactory. Students are keen to do well. Although teachers have high expectations for students, they do not always ensure that all students make good progress in lessons. A-level results in 2001 were well below average and below expectations based on GCSE results.
Spanish	Good. Students have a good understanding of the spoken and written word as a result of good teaching. They have a mature style of writing but lack confidence in speaking. They have few opportunities to work independently. No students took external examinations in 2001.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Standards were good in business studies, health and social care and satisfactory in key skills. Teaching and learning were good in the lessons observed in these subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students have good access to information and guidance. They value the very good support received from staff. Very effective careers education assists students well in determining their future courses and opportunities for employment. Students have a very clear understanding of what is involved for each course. Teachers monitor students' progress very carefully and deal with any concerns promptly. Students receive realistic targets for improvement. Teachers regularly review and evaluate progress towards these targets. Assessment is very good. Teachers use it well to improve learning and standards. Tutors work hard to improve the unsatisfactory levels of attendance of a few students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The recently appointed head of sixth form receives very good support from the acting vice-principal and co-ordinates the work of all staff well. There is a shared commitment among staff to supporting students and to helping them to reach their potential levels of attainment and personal development. The work of those who teach the sixth formers and of the tutors reflects fully the aims of the whole college. Standards in the sixth form are rising as a result of the college's commitment to improving further the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form and through its success in developing students' confidence and self-esteem. Students have access to a good range of courses as a result of the good arrangements made by the confederation of local sixth forms. Resources available for learning in the sixth form broadly match those in the rest of the college. Good use is made of the good quality of staffing, adequate resources and suitable accommodation for the teaching of courses.

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 have a good choice of subjects that suits their talents and aspirations. • Teaching is good, presents challenging work and helps students to study independently. • Teachers are supportive and accessible. • Relationships among students and with the teachers are good. • Students enjoy the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some want better information about their progress and future options. • Some want the college to respond more favourably to their views. • They would like better accommodation in a few subject areas.

Inspectors agree with most of students' positive views about the sixth form. However, they do not agree that students are helped sufficiently to develop their skills of studying independently. In respect of the points that some sixth formers feel could be improved, the findings of the inspection are that students receive plenty of useful information and good advice about their progress and options for the future and that students' views are carefully considered, though, understandably, not always accepted. Inspectors agree with students that some of the accommodation, for example in design and technology, is inadequate at times.

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 school's results and students' achievements

1. When they join the college at the age of 11, students' attainment is below average. Every year, around 25 boys and 40 girls, who live in the college's area, transfer from local grammar schools, having been selected on the basis of above and well above average attainment. Although the attainment of the current Year 7 is higher than that of recent years, it is below average. The proportion of students in Year 7 who had obtained the nationally expected level 4 at the end of Year 6 was below average in English, mathematics and science.
2. As they move through the college, students of all levels of attainment make generally good and at least satisfactory progress in subjects, apart from religious education and music in which their achievement is unsatisfactory. By the end of Year 11, students' attainment as shown by GCSE results is below average, although it has moved closer to the national average. In 2001, the college's results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 matched those attained by similar schools, based on the proportion of students entitled to receive free school meals. Results in GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 were above the average for similar schools.
3. Taking into account the above average proportion of students who have special educational needs, the college's results in GCSE examinations represent good achievement, particularly when compared with students' results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. In 1999, the college received a congratulatory letter from the Department for Education and Employment, as it was known then, in respect of its significantly improved performances in external examinations over a four-year period. Results fluctuate from one year to the next but usually represent good achievement relative to students' capabilities.
4. Students of all levels of attainment achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11 because the large majority have positive attitudes to their work and receive good teaching and support. They improve their work because teachers make very good use of assessment to set realistic targets and to give students a clear idea of what they need to do to improve. Students in Years 7 to 9 have a particularly good knowledge of their levels of attainment and what work is needed to reach the next level. Teachers help students to make good progress through adjusting the teaching programme to deal with those aspects of the work that students experience difficulty in understanding. Most students complete the work set in class and for homework to the best of their ability. One of the reasons for students in Years 7 to 9 making satisfactory or good rather than very good progress in many subjects is the inconsistency in provision of homework, which is very good at times, but is sometimes non-existent.
5. In a small number of classes, some students under-achieve as a result of unsatisfactory or poor teaching. The achievement of a few students is adversely affected by their unsatisfactory attendance. The poor behaviour of a few students, mainly boys, leads to unsatisfactory progress in a few classes of lower attaining students.

National Curriculum assessments of students at the end of Year 9

6. In 2001, students' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were below average in English and science. They were well below average in mathematics. Compared with the results attained by similar schools, the results were above average in English and science and below average in mathematics. They indicate good achievement in science, satisfactory achievement in English and unsatisfactory achievement in mathematics.
7. In English, teachers' assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 were well below the results that students obtained in 2001, partly because teachers were over-cautious in their assessments. In mathematics, teachers' assessments were above the levels that students attained mainly because students performed less well than expected in the examinations. In science, teachers' assessments broadly matched the test results.
8. Since the previous inspection in 1997, the college's results in national tests have improved at a broadly similar rate to the national improvement. They represent satisfactory achievement based on the prior attainment of students that was below average and fluctuated from one year to the next.
9. In 2001, girls' results in the national tests were higher than those of boys in English. They were slightly below those of boys in mathematics and science. The gap between the performance of girls and boys in these tests was narrower than that nationally. This reflects the profile of attainment within the college that results from a larger number of higher attaining girls than boys in the area attending selective grammar schools.
10. In 2001, teachers' assessments showed that the proportion of students achieving the expected National Curriculum level or higher was above average in art and design, design and technology and physical education. It was below average in geography and history, well below average in music and broadly average in other National Curriculum subjects.

GCSE results of students at the end of Year 11

11. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were below the national average in terms of the total average GCSE points scored per student. They show that students of all capabilities and backgrounds achieved higher grades in GCSE than expected from their levels of attainment when they entered the college.
12. A comparison of the GCSE results in 2001 with students' results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 shows that attainment was well above expectations for the 213 students who had been at the college during this period. The good, and sometimes very good, achievement is a consequence of good teaching, effective use of assessment to promote good learning and students' positive attitudes to their work. When compared with the performance of similar schools, the college's GCSE results in 2001 were above average.
13. Over the past four years, the improvement in GCSE results has been slightly below the national trend. Results fluctuate from one year to the next and reflect the differing levels of attainment of successive year groups. Results in 1999, for example, were average. In some years, the college's results are distorted by the effect of students

leaving the area before completing the examination. The irregular attendance of students who are travellers has an adverse effect on overall performance.

14. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was below the national average. It was above the average for similar schools. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C has increased from one student in every four at the time of the previous inspection to almost two students out of every five in 2001.
15. In 2001, GCSE results at grades A*-C were well above the national average in physical education, above average in science, ICT and drama and below average in most other subjects. Results at grades A*-G were above average in most subjects and show that students of low attainment and students with special educational needs achieve well.
16. Compared with their attainment in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the proportion of students gaining the higher GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 matched expectations in mathematics, was above expectations in English and was well above in science.
17. Over the past three years, the results both of boys and girls have been below their respective national averages. Girls have attained slightly better GCSE results than boys during this period.

Achievement in classes observed during the inspection

18. In Years 7 to 9, students are attaining standards that are similar to those attained in national tests in 2001. By the end of Year 9, work in class, homework and written work indicates that standards are average in art and design, design and technology, ICT and physical education. They are well below average in music and religious education and below average in other subjects.
19. Students' current achievement throughout Years 7 to 9, relative to their prior attainment, is good in English, art and design, design and technology, history, ICT and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in nearly all other subjects. Students' achievement in music and religious education is unsatisfactory mainly as a result of some teaching that is less than satisfactory.
20. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work are broadly similar to those achieved in GCSE examinations in 2001. They indicate good achievement overall. Currently, standards are average in science, art and design, design and technology, ICT and physical education. They are below average in other subjects and well below average in music.
21. Students' current achievement in Years 10 and 11, relative to their prior attainment, is good in science, design and technology, history, ICT and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects apart from religious education and music. It is unsatisfactory in music because the quality of teaching is inconsistent and ranges from very good to poor. It is unsatisfactory in religious education partly because students do not receive their entitlement to the subject.

Students with special educational needs

22. Students with special educational needs achieve well in GCSE examinations. In 2001, for example, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-G was above the average for similar schools. In 2000, the proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE pass at grades A*-G was well above the national average.
23. A scrutiny of a sample of the work of statemented students across a range of subjects in Years 7 to 10 indicated they are making good progress because teachers match the work to students' learning needs.
24. Students on the register of special educational needs, including those who have statements, achieve well in nearly all subjects. They make good progress in lessons and when they are withdrawn for particular support because teachers and classroom assistants prepare work of appropriate levels of difficulty and provide additional help for them.
25. The few students who have behavioural difficulties make good progress in classes in which the teacher manages their behaviour well. However, in a few classes, these students under-achieve because the teacher does not adequately assist them to control or modify their behaviour.
26. Students who have visual impairment achieve very well as a result of very effective planning and collaboration between the class teacher and the support staff that ensure these students maximise their potential. They benefit from the success of the college's policy for the social inclusion of all students. This enables these students to feel valued and gives them the confidence to try hard and to do their best.
27. The few students who are travellers were absent during the period of the inspection and evaluation of their work was not possible.

Students who are gifted or talented

28. The GCSE results of the small number of very high attaining students have been good compared with their prior attainment in most subjects. Few students have attained the highest grades of A* in GCSE examinations.
29. In Years 7 to 11, students who are gifted or talented are making good progress in many subjects. They are receiving increasingly good provision as a result of the college's identification of their particular needs. Departments prepare work and activities of appropriate interest and difficulty to help these students to achieve well.

Students for whom English is an additional language

30. The small number of students for whom English is an additional language make good progress partly as a result of receiving good support and work of suitable interest and difficulty. The achievements of students for whom English is an additional language and of students of ethnic-minority heritage are as good as those of other students.

Literacy and oracy

31. Standards of literacy and oracy are below average. Although students have below average skills in reading and writing, many of them are confident speakers. In all years and in many subjects, students engage actively in lively and relevant discussions in class. Written work is below average and often lacks accuracy, especially in spelling. Listening skills are satisfactory.
32. Students have satisfactory rather than good skills in literacy, relative to their levels of attainment, because the teaching of literacy is inconsistent among subjects, despite good initial work by the college on raising the awareness of all subject teachers to the importance of teaching literacy. However, students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 who have very low reading ages make much better than expected progress in reading, through following the innovative 'Help at Hand' programme, which enables the least confident readers to make rapid progress in just a few weeks. Students improve their reading in modern foreign languages and English because teachers encourage students to use dictionaries and the programmes of study include a good focus on using the library. However, in several subjects, lower attaining students struggle to understand technical terms, experience difficulties in reading accurately from worksheets and have too few opportunities to read aloud in class. In some subjects, students seldom write at length and therefore have only limited scope for developing their writing skills.

Numeracy

33. Students have below average standards of numeracy. They use these skills satisfactorily to enhance their work in many subjects. Students improve their skills in manipulating number through frequent, mental 'warm-up' exercises in mathematics lessons. However, the development of students' mathematical skills and their use to support work in other subjects are hindered because of inconsistency in practice across the college that sometimes confuses students of lower attainment. For example, teachers do not always know when it is appropriate or not for students to use a calculator and sometimes give unclear advice about the drawing of graphs. Lower attaining students are sometimes confused when teachers use different words to describe mathematical processes; for example, some teachers use the term 'negative three' others say 'minus three'.
34. Students practise and improve their mathematical skills in subjects other than mathematics. In science lessons, students regularly use graphs and formulae, especially in Years 10 and 11. In ICT lessons, students make effective use of problem solving and number when using spreadsheets. In design and technology, they use calculations when making artefacts and in preparing dishes of food. They develop their graphical skills through the increasing use of the interpretation of data in a number of subjects, for example history, in which they consider industrial output, casualties in war, and figures relating to unemployment. Students interpret bar charts and pie charts competently when using and analysing data in geography and physical education

Information and communication technology (ICT)

35. Students' skills in ICT improve as they move through the college and are average at the end of Year 11. Students of all levels of attainment make at least satisfactory use of their computing skills to promote their learning in many subjects, when given the chance. Most students handle computers confidently and accurately. In Year 9,

students competently use computer-aided design software and other packages to draw up plans for rooms that incorporate devices for saving energy. They have good skills in communicating their ideas using a range of software and can search out answers for themselves. Students use the Internet well for research and retrieval of information. They can download text, images and graphics with good skill. A few average and many lower attaining students do not develop their ICT skills sufficiently well because their literacy skills are inadequate and they do not proof-read and evaluate their work well enough.

Targets

36. The college usually sets suitably challenging targets for students and departments. It bases the targets for performance in external examinations on students' prior attainments and comparisons with appropriate national data. It comfortably exceeded its target for 34 per cent of students to gain five or more grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2001.
37. The college recognises the need to make appropriate educational provision for students according to their levels of attainment and potential. It is already planning to introduce more vocational courses for students currently in Year 8 for when they enter Year 10, because the profile of attainment for that particular group of students indicates that the present curricular arrangements in Year 10 would not fully suit students' academic needs.

Sixth form

38. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is below the national average. Many of the high attaining students in the area attend grammar or other selective schools from the age of 11.
39. Results in A-level, AS-level and vocational examinations in 2001 were below average when compared with the results attained by other secondary schools. They were average when compared with the results attained by all institutions that provide similar courses for post-16 students. In many subjects, the results indicate good achievement relative to students' previous performance in GCSE examinations.
40. In 2001, results in A-level examinations were well above the national average in biology, chemistry and sociology. They were above average in art and design and history and were average in ICT, mathematics and physical education. Results were below average in drama and design and technology. They were well below average in English literature and geography. The number of candidates in other subjects was too small to enable meaningful comparisons with national averages to be made. Results were below average in the advanced vocational courses in business, ICT and health and social care.
41. Given the starting points of students, achievement is currently good in eight of the 13 sixth form courses that were inspected in detail. Achievement is satisfactory in the other five subjects and is generally satisfactory in the other subjects that were seen. Students build well on their prior learning in these subjects.
42. Standards of work in the subjects inspected in detail were above average in art and design and biology. They were below average in drama and average in the other subjects. Overall, standards are as high as they should be given the GCSE results previously attained by students.

43. The college has a good record for retaining the students who embark on courses. Most students complete the courses they begin. After an initial settling down period at the start of Year 12, most students continue with their courses for at least a year. After AS-level courses, there is a fall in numbers as students have completed their courses as much as they want. The rates of retention on A-level and vocational courses in Year 13 are good. Most students complete their courses and sit the appropriate examinations.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

44. Students' attitudes to college are good. Many are enthusiastic about the college. They say that it has a lot to offer them and that they enjoy being there. The level of participation in extra-curricular activities is high. Homework clubs and sessions of extra study are popular with students as well as activities involving sport, music and drama. Parents think that attitudes are positive. Nine out of 10 who replied to the inspection's survey of their views said that their children liked college.
45. Students have good attitudes to learning in lessons. Although a few arrive late and are easily distracted from their work, the vast majority are well motivated and want to do well. They listen attentively, stay on task and sustain their concentration for the full lesson. Most students take pride in their work, but some, including high attainers, are occasionally careless in the presentation of work. In a few lessons, a small number of disaffected individuals have low aspirations and show little interest in learning. Their negative outlook harms their own attainment and restricts the progress of the whole class, as their teachers have to spend much time in getting them to work. Poor attitudes of this kind are more common among boys than girls and are generally found in classes of lower attaining students. Girls are more concerned about doing well than boys. All, except the few students whose behaviour is very challenging, respond positively to good or very good teaching. When teachers have high expectations and set stimulating tasks, as seen, for example, in a design and technology lesson, students take a keen interest in the subject. They showed real enthusiasm for learning and participated fully in activities, and as a result made very good progress. In contrast, attitudes deteriorated sharply when teaching was unsatisfactory, as seen in a Year 9 science lesson. Students in that lesson showed little interest in working, and made little progress because they did not see the relevance of what they were required to do.
46. In lessons, the attitudes and behaviour of students with special educational needs is positive. They respond well to the help and support they receive and are keen to make progress. In the Year 11 support class, for example, the students' very good attitudes and behaviour helped to promote a very positive learning atmosphere. In lessons in which students with special educational needs receive extra support from teaching assistants, other students often benefit through asking for and receiving help. A group of Year 11 students with statements of special educational needs said that they appreciated the extra help and support they have received since they joined the college. One student commented, "I don't reckon there's much more they could do!"
47. According to the survey of parental views, eight out of 10 parents think that students behave well. Inspectors partially agree with their judgement. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, both in class and around the site. Most students are friendly and polite to adults and get on well with each other. They handle equipment carefully and show respect for property. However, they have less regard for the environment, as the large amount of litter around the site shows. Inspectors did not observe any instances of

bullying. Some students, including those with visual impairment, say that they were bullied in the past, but believe that bullying is not a feature of life in the college at the present time. In their view, the main causes of distress are sudden fallings-out between girls. There is some boisterous behaviour out of class. A small number of students, mainly boys in lower attaining groups, sometimes behave poorly in lessons to the detriment of their learning and progress. Generally, their behaviour is immature and thoughtless rather than malicious, but occasionally students are deliberately disruptive. The minority of parents who are unhappy with standards of behaviour therefore have some justification for their opinion.

48. The rate of exclusion has risen since the previous inspection. It peaked in the autumn term of 2001, and is now starting to decline. The rise and fall in the number of exclusions reflects changes to the college's policy on exclusion. It does not reflect variations in standards of behaviour.
49. The quality of relationships is good. When asked to name the best features of the college, many students said 'friendly teachers'. They also say that they have made good friends among their peers. In the vast majority of lessons, relationships among students, and between students and staff, are based on trust and understanding and are good. These good relationships enhance the quality of learning and promote progress. Students work hard because they like, and want to please, their teachers. They co-operate well with one another in group work, and respect one another's opinions and feelings. In all areas of college life, good relationships promote social inclusion and help to create a strong sense of community. In tutorials and personal and social education lessons, for example, students of all levels of attainment and different ethnic origins and cultures work together well. They relate well to one another in the dining hall and playground. There is no evidence of racism or of friction between different groups of students.
50. Students' personal development is good. They respond well to opportunities to take the initiative and to accept responsibilities. They value the college and year councils. They think that these give students real influence over the college's policies and provision of facilities. Council representatives regard their roles as well worthwhile and are proud of their achievements. Older students get excellent opportunities to exercise responsibility. They contribute very positively to the life of the college as peer mediators and prefects. All students become increasingly mature during their years in the college. The programme for personal and social education develops their listening skills, gives them confidence in speaking to an audience and enhances their ability to work as a team. Students in Year 11 successfully complete a two-week period of work experience. Employers praise them for their responsible attitudes and their ability to use initiative. Students and members of staff are justified in saying that work experience raises students' aspirations and boosts self-esteem. Personal development is weakest in the area of independent learning. Even older students are often over-reliant on their teachers. Many need help with personal organisation and study skills in order to meet deadlines and to revise successfully.
51. Attendance was 90.1 per cent in the college year 2000/2001. This figure was below the national average for secondary schools in that year of 90.9 per cent. In the autumn term of 2001, only Years 7 and 8 had attendance rates of over 90 per cent. Attendance is lowest in Year 10. This year group had a high rate of unauthorised absence last autumn, and many of its students had missed at least one college session without good reason. The majority of students of all ages attend college regularly. However, there are many students who are frequently absent, or are away for prolonged periods, and therefore do not fulfil their potential.

52. The college has made good progress since the previous inspection. The rate of attendance remains relatively low, and a minority of students still behave disruptively in lessons, but attitudes to learning have improved. Students' attitudes, values and personal development make a positive contribution to standards of attainment.

Sixth form

53. Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They are satisfied with the provision being made for their needs and recognise the value of what the college has to offer. After an initial period of settling in during the first few weeks of the autumn term, the rate of retention of students on courses in the sixth form is good. The majority of students come into the sixth form with high expectations and a commitment to success. They have good attitudes to learning and make satisfactory progress in developing their study skills. They are prepared to work hard in lessons and at home. They rise to the challenge of more demanding work. They listen carefully to their teachers, concentrate well, and make notes diligently. Most students are competent learners. They organise themselves well, complete homework assignments on time, and cope well with coursework. However, some are passive and lack the confidence to tackle challenging tasks on their own. They rely on a good deal of support from teachers. A few need constant encouragement in order to overcome their anxieties about the work.
54. Personal development and relationships are good in the sixth form. Students collaborate well with one another in lessons and socialise in a friendly atmosphere out of class. Individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds mix well together. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students speak highly of members of staff and the help that they receive from them. They like being treated as young adults and feel that they receive good opportunities to exercise responsibility. They value the chance to participate in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and to take part in fund raising for charity through the sixth form council. The majority are courteous, behave well and have a sensible outlook on life. They have mature views, which they enjoyed expressing articulately and confidently to members of the inspection team.
55. Attendance is satisfactory in the sixth form. The college's main registers tend to understate the true figures because many students are at other sites at the start of the day, or are not required to be present for registration. Discussions with teachers and students confirm that attendance at lessons is satisfactory.
56. The previous report did not distinguish between the quality of attitudes, behaviour and personal development in the main college and the sixth form. However, the college has at least maintained the strengths that existed four years ago.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

57. The quality of teaching is good throughout the college. Students learn well and make good or better progress in most lessons.
58. Teaching was satisfactory or better in almost 19 out of every 20 of the lessons observed. It was good or better in more than three lessons out of every five and very good in a quarter of all lessons seen. In three lessons, teaching was excellent. In about one lesson out of every 20, teaching was unsatisfactory, including four lessons in which it was poor.

59. The quality of teaching is good both in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 in English. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In science, it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In all three subjects, there were examples of very good, good and satisfactory teaching. In English, a small amount of teaching was excellent. In mathematics and science, teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in a small number of lessons.
60. The quality of teaching in art and design and physical education was very good in Years 7 to 9. Teaching was good in Years 7 to 11 in design and technology, ICT and history. It was good in art and design and music in Years 10 and 11 and in geography in Years 7 to 9. Teaching was satisfactory in all other National Curriculum subjects in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11, apart from music in which teaching was unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The teaching of religious education was unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. No teaching of religious education was observed in Years 10 and 11.
61. A small amount of teaching was excellent in art and design. Some very good teaching occurred in all the subjects of the National Curriculum apart from modern foreign languages. The teaching in personal and social education lessons was good overall and ranged from very good to satisfactory.
62. In the large majority of subjects, the quality of teaching varies from very good to satisfactory. However, the quality ranges in a few subjects from very good to poor. In music, for example, three of the nine lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 were very good, but two others were poor. Even in a successful department such as science, a small amount of teaching was less than satisfactory. The main contributory factors to teaching that was not good enough include the lack of expertise of non-specialist teachers, low expectations, ineffective planning and weak management of students.
63. The college's very good programme for the professional development of staff and the successful application of the system of performance management have helped most teachers to acquire a good competence in a range of teaching methods. As a result, nearly all teachers ensure that students learn at a good pace in lessons and improve their standards over time. In most subjects, teachers are making increasingly effective use of the college's very good procedures for assessing students' work and progress to enable students to work at levels appropriate to their attainment. Often, teachers use the information gained from the marking and assessment of students' work to adjust what and how they teach. Students have a clear understanding of their current standards and what they need to do to improve. Accordingly they have good motivation to succeed.
64. In most classes, the good rapport between teachers and students provides a purposeful environment for learning. In a very good English lesson for a Year 11 class of high attaining students, for example, very good relationships between the teacher and students ensured that very good learning took place. Students acquired a very good understanding of what the GCSE examiner would expect in students' responses to questions arising from their reading and comprehension of a non-fiction text. Students' close attention and focus on the work meant that the teacher could move rapidly through the introductory session of revision and review of previous learning. The teacher's good planning of the lesson provided students with a clear outline of what they were expected to learn. During periods of discussion, a civilised atmosphere was evident in which students had no need generally to raise their hands in order to speak, but intervened sensibly as the thoughts occurred to them. Students responded very positively to the teacher's high expectations and the brisk pace of the lesson. A particularly positive feature in this lesson was the way in which students

enhanced their understanding through thinking things out for themselves. This enabled them to increase their awareness of techniques of persuasive writing, including the use of presenting opposing arguments as an initial ploy.

65. Teaching has many strengths. These include teachers' good knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects and, especially, the very effective use that most teachers make of assessment to help students to improve their standards of work. In nearly all subjects, the teaching of the basic skills of the particular subject is good. Students make good progress in most lessons because teachers usually plan their lessons carefully and well. However, in religious education, planning is poor and leads to students under-achieving in the subject because the work is not of suitable difficulty to meet the needs of all individuals. In most classes, teachers have suitably high expectations for students' progress and achievement and provide work that enables students to make good progress towards their targets for improvement. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods that succeed in keeping students motivated and interested in the work. Most teachers manage their classes well and handle the few students who have behavioural difficulties sensitively and appropriately. One of the features of the few lessons that were less than satisfactory was the inability of the teacher to manage instances of poor behaviour effectively.
66. Teachers make generally good use of the time available. They use the available resources for learning to good effect. Homework, of sufficient amount and suitable quality, is used well to support students' learning in Years 10 and 11, but in Years 7 to 9 the quality and quantity of provision vary from very good to non-existent. Students in Years 10 and 11 spoke of the 'culture-shock' they experienced when they encountered the increased amount of homework presented in Year 10 compared with what they had previously received.
67. As a result of the college's systems to make teaching and learning more consistently good, most lessons have a clear introduction, which gives students a clear understanding of the aims of the work. In the good and very good lessons, teachers provide a good range of interesting and challenging activities. Towards the end of many lessons, and sometimes at other times during the lesson, students consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the work through helpful plenary sessions that review what has been learned and put the learning in the context of what is to happen next. Students' learning is often good or better because they concentrate well, have good attitudes, work hard and co-operate well with each other and the teacher. In the lessons that were less than satisfactory some students responded in a poor manner to ineffective teaching.
68. Many of the features that are present in very good lessons in many subjects were observed in a very good history lesson in a Year 9 class of low attaining students. More than half of the students had special educational needs, including a few with statements of special educational needs. The teacher had planned the lesson about Hitler very well and used a very good knowledge of the subject to enthuse the students. Through the teacher's effective explanations, students developed a clear understanding of how Hitler came to power. They consolidated their learning through the use of reprographic materials that were easily accessible and of suitable interest and difficulty that enabled all students to work at a pace appropriate to their capability. Students developed their basic skills by reading short extracts and through exercises that forced them to think for themselves. This was a potentially difficult class to manage because it contained several students with behavioural difficulties. The teacher managed the class very effectively as a result of high expectations that students would work hard and behave well. Students maintained their concentration

well because the teacher had presented work of suitable challenge and interest and provided appropriate support for the statemented students. Accordingly, students responded very well to the teacher's questions and volunteered answers and suggestions. During this lesson, students made good progress in developing their skills of research and were able to extract relevant information to make simple interpretations of sources of research. Their answers to questions in class showed that students had a good recollection of Hitler's earlier life that had been covered in a previous lesson.

69. Teaching was satisfactory in around three lessons in every ten. These lessons contained some of the features that were present in the good lessons. They also had a few shortcomings that prevented them from being good. In these lessons, for example, the teachers tend to play a more dominant part in the learning process and students play a less active part. Students in these lessons are not always made to think for themselves; they become too reliant on the teacher. Sometimes the work is not always suitably matched to the individual needs of students. In these lessons, teachers tend to do any reading aloud themselves and limit the amount of discussion. The result is that students then have few opportunities to develop their confidence and competence in reading and speaking. Occasionally, there was ineffective management of students who have behavioural difficulties. In a few of the satisfactory lessons, the teaching was uninspiring and the good pace of learning was due to the positive attitudes of the students towards their work.
70. Students with special educational needs, including those with visual impairments, are made to feel welcome in all classes by teachers and other students. As a result, they increase their confidence and self-esteem and enjoy their learning.
71. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. They prepare their work appropriately to help these students to make good progress. Teaching assistants support the learning of these students very effectively, as seen in a Year 9 lesson for students of average attainment. Students made good progress because the teacher ensured that the requirements of the students' individual education plans were followed carefully. In a low attaining Year 11 mathematics class, the teaching assistant worked well with the teacher to ensure that the entire group was on task and making progress at rates commensurate with their levels of attainment. Support teachers from the learning support department teach the lowest attaining English classes. The quality of their teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is good. Students learn well because they are clear about what is required of them and teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure a good pace of learning. In physical education lessons, in which there is no additional support, the good management and control of teachers ensure that students with emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress in lessons. Good demonstrations and explanations support well the learning of those students who have moderate learning difficulties.
72. In withdrawal sessions, students in Years 7 to 9 receive effective support and guidance when using computer-based programmes for individual learning that help them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. They use the computers with confidence and record the progress they are making. Some of these students, however, are withdrawn from the same lessons every week to receive this support. This affects the continuity of their work in these subjects and slightly restricts their progress.

73. In Years 10 and 11, students with special educational needs make good progress during the lessons provided as an optional choice, in which they receive support for their work in a range of GCSE and certificate of achievement subjects. In one Year 11 lesson, for example, students received good support in English, mathematics, science and sociology, and in work for the youth award scheme. The teacher circulated well and made effective use of a good breadth of knowledge to ensure that all students stayed on task and produced work of an appropriate standard and at a suitable pace. The quality of teaching and learning in the youth award scheme lessons is also good. A Year 11 lesson, for example, started promptly with a clear exposition of what students needed to complete in order to achieve the bronze award. The teacher was particularly effective in helping students to produce evidence to support the tasks they were completing
74. The teaching of students who have visual impairment is good. Often it is very good. The very good co-operation and joint planning of lessons between subject teachers and the support assistants ensure that the visually impaired students receive work that very suitably matches their needs and helps them to achieve very well. The quality of learning for visually impaired students is good, and often very good, because they are taught alongside their peers and experience the same quality of teaching as other students. They benefit further from very good and specialist support. Teaching assistants are very well prepared because they know students very well and have good relationships with them. The specialist teacher in touch-typing, for example, uses her expertise very effectively to allow students to work at an appropriate pace. The quality of support that students receive is better than the quality of the individual education plans. The co-ordinator for special educational needs and the newly appointed co-ordinator for the provision for visually impaired students recognise that the usefulness of students' individual targets on these plans varies considerably. For example, a target such as, 'to increase reading and spelling ages by one year' is measurable, whereas to 'be more organised' or to 'increase work ethic' are too vague. Accordingly, students are not necessarily sure when they have achieved success. This has been identified as an area for development.
75. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory but lacks consistency across subjects. Despite good earlier good work by the college on raising awareness among all subject teachers of the importance of teaching literacy, departmental practice across the curriculum is inconsistent. This means that in history, for example, students' progress is hindered because of their weaknesses in writing, even though teachers in several subjects, including history, give good support for students' writing, either through careful marking of errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation or through offering suggested frameworks on which students can construct their written work.
76. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory across the college. It is often good, as in mathematics lessons, but lacks a consistency of approach, so that students of low attainment are sometimes confused about methods. The mathematics department has adopted a very positive approach to the National Numeracy Strategy. It has produced a suitable, draft policy for numeracy for the consideration of all staff. Mathematics lessons frequently contain a numeracy 'warm-up' exercise that most students and teachers clearly enjoy. These activities help to improve students' competence in manipulating number. The lack of consistency in teachers' use of mathematical terms and processes in different subjects sometimes causes confusion and hinders learning, particularly among lower attaining students.
77. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory. In a few subjects it is good. Departments suitably include the use of ICT within their schemes of work. In science, the limited availability of data-loggers

restricts the range of ICT experiences. A few subjects find access to the computer rooms difficult. As a result, students in these subjects do not use or develop their ICT skills sufficiently to enhance or extend their work.

78. The few students for whom English is an additional language receive the same good quality of teaching as other students. They benefit from specialist support suited to their individual needs and accordingly make good progress in most subjects.
79. The quality of students' learning is similar to the quality of teaching in nearly all subjects. Students learn at a good pace in most subjects because they have positive attitudes and are eager to do well. The good relationships among students and between teachers and students promote a good climate for learning.
80. The good planning of most lessons leads to purposeful starts that lead to good learning by students. They respond positively to the generally brisk pace and purposeful challenge of the work. Most students apply themselves well and are productive in their work. They work hard and creatively and at a good pace to develop their basic skills in the particular subjects they are studying. In many lessons they make good progress through engaging in an interesting variety of tasks. In the best lessons, students make fast progress when activities are arranged in short blocks of time with clear targets for improvement within each section. Most keep their concentration and interest throughout lessons. They acquire good basic skills and a good knowledge and understanding of the work in subjects. Students have a good knowledge of their own learning and what they need to do to improve as a result of the very effective use of assessment and good marking by most teachers. When they have the opportunity, they enjoy working independently and improve their skills in research. They co-operate well with each other in paired and group work. Among the reasons that learning is good overall, rather than very good, is that in some classes, teachers tend to be too prescriptive in how the work should be tackled, and in a few subjects, students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to extend their learning.
81. An interesting and very successful feature is the programme for teaching lessons at the college on a frequent and regular basis to pupils from the partner primary schools. This programme helps to ensure the continuity of learning from Year 6 to Year 7 in many subjects. It has recently encouraged the college to reconsider and develop its strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy in Years 7 to 9 as part of its plans for implementing the national Key Stage 3 strategy.
82. The college has improved the good quality of both teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection. It has increased the proportions of teaching that are good and very good. It has reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching from one in seven to one in 20 of the lessons observed.

Sixth form

83. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Of the lessons observed, two thirds were at least good or better and just over one in five were very good or excellent. One of the 54 lessons observed was poor. The overall good quality of teaching in the sixth form that was reported at the previous inspection remains.
84. Teaching and learning in the sixth form contain similarly good and very good features as the teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11. The very good and occasionally excellent teaching contains carefully planned and challenging activities that force students to think. Students quickly become involved in learning new concepts, facts

and ideas. In a good lesson in art and design, the teacher acted as a facilitator for learning and assisted students to develop their skills in solving such problems as designing a necktie to carry a logo on the neck of a bottle and using transformations to design tattoos. In a Year 13 lesson in Spanish, students responded well to the high expectations of the teacher and enjoyed a good rapport. They have learned to be critical of each other's work and help each other to improve in a mature and sensible manner. In a good chemistry lesson for a Year 12 class, students reacted positively to the challenge and encouragement presented by the teacher. They worked hard and thoughtfully to consolidate their knowledge of enthalpy by applying it to solve problems, often consulting one another to test their hypotheses. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson on mechanics, the teacher teased definitions out of the students, made them think hard so that they could visualise various mechanical situations and succeeded in increasing students' conceptual awareness of mechanics.

85. In physics, the quality of teaching ranged from very good to poor. In a very good lesson in Year 12, the teacher's very good knowledge of physics and very good planning ensured that students made very good progress. Students enhanced their understanding of work on acceleration because they had several opportunities to exercise their own initiative and to carry out their own reading and analyses. By contrast, students made little progress in a poor lesson about measuring the charge on an electron, because the teacher's knowledge of the subject was uncertain at times, the planning of the lesson was unsatisfactory, the quality of visual aids was inadequate and the few students played very little part in the lesson.
86. Teachers provide good help to students in respect of preparation for external examinations. In an AS-level geography class, for example, the teacher very effectively used a model answer to reinforce the main learning points of the lesson and their relevance to the requirements of the examination. This led to a good and informative discussion among the students and increased their interest and motivation. It also provided a good foundation upon which the teacher could base the next phase of the work on coastal erosion.
87. Just under one third of the teaching and learning in the sixth form was satisfactory rather than good. Often the reason for this was that the teacher tended to be over-prescriptive so that students were too dependent upon the teacher and did not develop their skills of independent research. Even in lessons in which teaching was good this happened. For example, in a good A-level lesson in biology, students tended only to answer questions directed at them by the teacher and were reluctant to pose their own questions. They relied on printed material for revision purposes rather than making their own notes. In a Year 12 class in English literature, learning was not sufficiently brisk because the aims of the lesson were not very clear to the students. The teacher missed opportunities to extend students' understanding of the text, for example, by not encouraging the students to use American accents when reading from Tennessee Williams's text.
88. A few subjects in the sixth form, such as geography, are taught within the confederation of local sixth forms. Students say that they value these arrangements. The close and effective collaboration and planning among the teachers from the three institutions involved in this confederation promote students' learning well and provide a greater range of learning opportunities than would otherwise be available. Continuity and consistency in students' learning are supported well by the good teamwork of the participating teachers. In one of the subjects taught as part of the confederation, physical education, students worked co-operatively with students from the other

colleges and were making suitable progress in a lesson that took place on another site.

89. Most teachers have a good understanding of the way in which older students learn best. In many but not all of the subjects, teachers include a good balance of discussion, thinking and problem solving. Students on vocational and A-level and AS-level courses learn good techniques in how to handle examinations. As a result, they gain in confidence and develop an understanding of the more complex demands made on them as they proceed through the courses. Students work well, have positive attitudes to their studies and are generally productive. Many enhance and extend their class work through research and assignments. Students make satisfactory use of the college's learning resource area to consolidate their learning and to develop their skills in research.
90. Teachers mark and assess students' work thoroughly in most subjects. Good verbal and written feedback gives students a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve. Students said they received good support and guidance that provided them with a clear idea of their expected levels in examinations.

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

91. The quality and range of the curriculum are good. Students enhance their learning through active participation in a very good range of visits and trips and in many clubs and activities outside lessons. The college has a clear curricular policy and a very effective, whole-college approach to planning the curriculum. This involves senior managers, subject leaders and governors. The planning of the curriculum is thorough. It is based on careful analysis of data relating to the attainment of the students. Changes and innovations are carefully evaluated. The curriculum is very responsive to the needs and capabilities of all students. This highly responsive approach is shown in the way the college is already planning for the current Year 8 when they make choices in Year 10. The profile of attainment of this year group has been analysed carefully to ensure a good range of courses is available to meet their identified needs.
92. In Years 7 to 9, the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught with a satisfactory amount of time allocated to them. The issues of inappropriate, timetabling arrangements, including the spacing of lessons, which were identified at the previous inspection, have generally been tackled successfully. The exception is the amount of time allocated for the study of two modern foreign languages, which is low and has an adverse effect on standards. The planning of schemes of work is satisfactory in most subjects. Requirements of the National Curriculum are met. In music, however, there is too much emphasis on work on keyboards and not enough on singing.
93. The range of opportunities offered to students in Years 10 and 11 is good and meets most of the needs and interests of students. The breadth of the curriculum is good rather than very good because it does not meet statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education and for a daily act of collective worship, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. The subjects of the National Curriculum are studied together with a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Students can study up to ten GCSE subjects and a very effective programme of personal and social education and careers education. In Years 10 and 11, the college makes very good provision for students with special educational needs and for a small number of students who find it difficult to follow the entire curriculum because of poor

attendance, poor behaviour or lack of motivation. These students are identified carefully and receive extensive support and mentoring. They follow fewer GCSE courses and take a pre-vocational course at a local college of further education that includes an alternative work-based provision or a specially designed course in life-skills. They have good opportunities, through the work placements, to study for a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), for example, in horticulture. One student who attends college as well as following a horticultural course commented, "I really love it, it's what I like doing." Other students are able to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which contributes considerably to the personal development of these students. This thorough planning for the needs of identified groups of students is also shown in the co-ordinated provision being made for higher attaining students. These students have been identified using data about attainment and information from subject teachers. Each subject has set out how it will meet the needs of these students. This programme has been introduced very recently and its influence on standards has yet to emerge.

94. Staff work hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for students with special educational needs. The programme of targeted support for literacy in withdrawal sessions, particularly for younger students, in-class support in mainstream lessons and the special lessons of support in Years 10 and 11, mean that students with special educational needs can access the full range of learning opportunities. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs has improved since the previous inspection
95. Curricular provision for the teaching of literacy is satisfactory. However, the lack of a clear and coherent policy for literacy hinders students' progress particularly in the improvement of their writing skills. Curricular provision for numeracy is satisfactory. A similar lack of a clear and consistently operated policy for teaching numeracy means that students are sometimes confused about which mathematical methods to use.
96. The college has excellent links with partner institutions. Students increase their awareness of citizenship, business, commerce and industry through the college's very effective links with the community outside the college. Imaginative and extensive links with partner primary schools are helping to raise standards. The college has invested time to allow its own teachers to work with teachers and pupils from these schools. For example, during the inspection, Year 3 pupils visited the college to work with a food technology teacher on designing a healthy sandwich. Younger pupils enjoy using the specialist facilities in the college, for example in physical education. The 'Moving On' project is a very good example of the care with which these links with the primary schools are planned and used. The work on this project starts with the younger pupils and is transferred and carried on in the college in a number of subjects. In this way there is good continuity of work and good induction of Year 7 students into the college.
97. The provision for students' personal development is good. A positive and friendly spirit within the college, characterised by good relationships and mutual respect, provides a supportive context for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The college has recently produced a useful discussion paper on personal development so that departments can identify more closely ways in which different subjects can contribute to this aspect of students' education. Assemblies and the 'theme for the week' arrangements provide good opportunities for personal development. Students in Years 7 to 11 attend assemblies three times a week. These are lively, carefully planned occasions. Well-prepared material helps teachers to develop the weekly theme with their tutor groups on the two other days of the week. Whilst this is done

effectively with some groups, the practice is inconsistent, so that statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not fully met. Since the previous inspection, moral and social education have remained strong and opportunities for spiritual and cultural development have improved.

98. Provision for students' spiritual development is now satisfactory. Assemblies successfully promote clear values and encourage students to think deeply about fundamental issues. Insufficient time for reflection leads to some missed opportunities for spiritual development. Teaching styles in many subjects encourage self-respect and respect for others by valuing students' contributions and recognising their achievements. The programme for personal and social education provides very good opportunities for raising students' self-esteem and helping them to value themselves and other people. Opportunities to develop spiritual awareness and insights are clearly identified in some subjects. In English, for example, students enhance their spiritual awareness in work in poetry, as seen in Year 8 students' work on Coleridge, through projects such as the sinking of the Titanic and in Year 10's work on Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible'. In design and technology, students learn to appreciate the aesthetic properties of designs. However, planning for this aspect of students' education is under-developed in many subjects, which means opportunities are sometimes missed.
99. The college makes good provision for students' moral development. The code of conduct, put together by students through the college council, provides a good framework of values to guide the life and work of the college. Teachers set good examples and have clear expectations about how students should behave and treat each other. Subjects such as personal and social education, English and the humanities provide valuable opportunities for discussion on ethical issues and moral dilemmas. In these subjects, frequent discussions occur about the nature and responsibilities of citizenship. In religious education, students consider moral standpoints when discussing codes by which to live. These opportunities encourage students to consider a range of viewpoints and to think about some of the choices they will need to make in life.
100. Provision for social education is very good and continues to be a strength of the college. Students have many opportunities to develop social and collaborative skills in lessons, for example when working in pairs or small groups. The college council gives students very good opportunities to take on responsibilities and show initiative. Its members take part in the selection of staff, and it decides on charities to be supported by the college and organises the fund raising. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme provides a large number of students with a wide range of opportunities to develop their social awareness and skills, and has been instrumental in promoting the college's link with a school in Gambia.
101. Provision for students' cultural development is good. Opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures have improved since the previous inspection. Work in subjects such as geography, textiles, food technology, English, art and design and music provides good opportunities for students to learn about different cultures. During the multi-cultural day, which takes place in Year 8, visitors from a wide range of cultural and religious traditions help students to explore aspects of multi-cultural Britain. Cultural interests and horizons are extended through students' participation in the college's very good extra-curricular programme of sport, music, drama and other activities. Students also have good opportunities for residential experience, field trips, travel abroad, and visits to theatres and galleries. The annual 'curricular enhancement' week at the end of the summer

term, which takes in many of these activities, ensures that all students have the chance to extend their experience and broaden their interests.

102. The college's ethos of inclusion and support for those students with special educational needs has a positive impact on the social development and learning experience of the students with special educational needs, as well as that of all other students in the college.
103. The personal development of students is enhanced through a good programme of personal and social education. This programme provides students with good information and valuable opportunities to research and discuss topics relating to health matters. It helps students to develop mature and responsible attitudes about sex, drugs, racism and other sensitive topics. It promotes students' multi-cultural awareness and their consideration of people less fortunate than themselves.

Sixth form

104. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the sixth form are good. They build effectively on the courses provided in Years 10 and 11 and provide a further range of courses to meet students' interests and capabilities. These opportunities match students' aspirations and requirements for the next stage in their life. They provide good equality of access to students from a wide range of backgrounds and attainment. An important feature of this curricular provision is the long-standing confederation of three colleges. The day-to-day planning and organisation of the confederation is very good. Lessons run at common times and transport is efficient. There are good systems for monitoring students' performance and attendance through formal methods and frequent informal contacts among the three colleges. This collaboration is very successful in extending local provision because the range of subjects that can be offered to students is increased. Courses run which would not be financially viable in just one college. A good example of the benefits of collaboration is the response to students' increasing interest in psychology through the appointment of a teacher to the confederation, rather than to one college. In addition, students benefit from contact with a larger population of students whilst retaining all the good features of continuity in their home college. The college has close links with another local consortium of schools and colleges that provide an extensive range of work-based NVQs. The curriculum is kept under constant review and, in addition to the traditional A-level and vocational courses, offers new courses, such as law, to meet the needs of students. Students receive good support and guidance when choosing sixth form courses. Induction to the sixth form is good; it includes opportunities to meet with students from the other colleges in the confederation during a day at the local university. The college has developed good links with the local university that are helping to raise students' aspirations and goals for post-18 education.
105. Most students study four subjects at AS-level and a course in AS-level general studies in Year 12. Many proceed to study three A-level subjects in Year 13. A smaller number follow advanced vocational programmes (AVCEs) or vocational programmes at intermediate and foundation levels. The personal development of students is fostered through the general studies programme for AS-level and A-level students and by a well-planned 'issues' programme for vocational students. While this provision is satisfactory a few students following AS-level and A-level courses do not follow either of these courses for personal development. The college recognises this weakness in provision and plans are in hand to rectify the situation. The requirements for all students to follow a course in religious education and for a daily act of collective

worship are not met. A recent well-planned innovation has been the co-ordination of the work across the confederation on the key skills of communication, ICT and application of number. In Stoke Damerel College, students gather a portfolio of evidence from work done in subjects, as well attending some lessons especially for the development of key skills. Teachers in a few subjects are making a good contribution to this work on key skills. In an AS-level geography lesson, students were asked to produce two descriptions on the formation of Lulworth Cove, one for geographers and one for the general public.

106. Students are involved in a wide range of other activities such as community work, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and charity. Through these many activities they make a good contribution to the life of the whole college and their own personal development. Students' timetables show a satisfactory balance of time between taught sessions and time for independent study. Many students make good use of the library as an area for study.
107. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form is of a similarly good quality to that in the rest of the college. The quality of careers education and guidance is very good. Sixth formers have good opportunities to exercise leadership and responsibility within the college. They are taking initiatives to raise money for the school in Gambia, and over 60 sixth form students are involved in activities in the main college, such as mentoring and paired reading.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

108. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The college takes very good care of all its students. It provides them with a secure and supportive environment, which promotes their academic progress and personal development. Students know and appreciate that members of staff care deeply about their welfare. As one student remarked during the inspection, "They never give up on you."
109. Students have ready access to support whenever they need it. They have good relationships with teachers and therefore feel able to approach them over problems and concerns. The college provides many alternative sources of guidance. Students can seek help from form tutors, heads of year, and subject teachers. They can also drop into the student-support base for advice. If they do not feel comfortable with a member of staff they can consult the college nurse or use the college's 'peer mediators'. The latter are student volunteers who are trained to deal with problems in relationships among students, such as bullying. Students spoke highly of the quality of support that they receive. They said that teachers were very helpful over all kinds of problems.
110. The college has a clear understanding of the importance of personal development for students' academic progress. It seeks to enhance their personal and social skills in order to remove barriers to learning. It has therefore put in place very good procedures for monitoring and promoting personal development. The effective pastoral structure, based on form tutors and heads of year that remain with the same students from Year 7 to Year 11, builds up good relationships between staff and students. Teachers know students well as individuals and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Pastoral staff receive extensive information on students' academic and personal progress from the college's very good systems of formal assessment and recording. These include details of targets for personal, social and study skills. Staff share much of the information with students through discussion and through the formal procedures for records of achievement. Students therefore acquire a good

understanding of their own learning and personal development. Tutors and heads of year make good use of records of assessment to identify individuals who are having problems and to provide them with appropriate support. The college refers a small number who are experiencing serious difficulties to the student-support base where they receive help, such as training in assertiveness, that is tailored to their particular needs. The support base, which is financed by the Retention Grant, is a recent initiative. It is already having success in getting several students back into mainstream lessons. It is making an important contribution to the college's provision for social inclusion. The programme of personal and social education is also very effective in promoting inclusion. It successfully enhances students' key skills, social development and self-belief, and consequently helps to break down barriers to learning. It gives good coverage to issues that affect inclusion, such as racism and bullying, and also provides students with guidance of high quality at crucial times of their lives. Lessons in personal and social education and tutorials deal very effectively with the induction of new students, selection of options in Year 9, and transfer to the sixth form.

111. Arrangements for promoting attendance are good. The college accurately records students' attendance and the reasons for all absences. It rigorously follows up instances of unexplained absence. It has recently provided time for administrative staff to make first-day contact with the homes of absent students, and has allocated extra resources to fund additional time from the education welfare officer. The college analyses form registers carefully and identifies individuals and groups of students who are frequently absent. Parents receive letters when their child's attendance is in need of improvement. The college draws the attention of parents and students to the close correlation between good attendance and academic success in order to win their support. There are positive incentives for students to attend college in the form of good rewards for high attendance. The college has put in place some long-term measures to improve attendance. For example, it has created an alternative curriculum for students who are in danger of dropping out of education altogether. The student-support base plays a part in keeping in college some students who are experiencing problems. The inclusion assistant mentors these students and helps them to arrive on time for lessons. Some of the arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance are too new to have had an impact on rates of attendance, which remain below the national average. The college is aware that its procedures could be improved further. It is, therefore, making a bid for an electronic registration system. However, its latest initiatives have impressed students. They think that the college is now much more likely to catch truants.
112. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are good. The college's positive approach to discipline and its good support for staff and students enable it to cope with some individuals who have serious behavioural difficulties. Students are clear as to what is expected of them. They helped to draw up the code of conduct and have a sense of ownership of it. They understand the system of sanctions and rewards and, in general, respond well to them. Students like the large number of rewards that subject departments give for good work and behaviour. The college has effective procedures for dealing with disruption to lessons. Students who behave badly are removed from the classroom and 'parked' with another member of staff. In severe cases they may be sent to work in isolation. Members of staff usually manage students' behaviour effectively. They receive regular training and briefings in good practice. Arrangements for promoting good behaviour out of class are good. The pastoral system deals effectively with specific instances of bullying, while much preventative work is carried out through the programme of personal and social education. The college sometimes has to use exclusion as a sanction against overt

aggression, such as physical assault. When it excludes a student, it does so for valid reasons and in accordance with proper procedures.

113. The college makes good provision for child protection. Its procedures meet legal requirements and make every reasonable effort to ensure students' welfare. Arrangements for first aid cover and risk assessment are good. The college has a clear and comprehensive policy for health and safety, which is supported well by practical checks and measures to deal with hazards. The college is aware of minor defects and does its best to remedy them. There is an ongoing problem with some of the entrance and exit doors that spring backwards and forwards too freely and are in danger of hitting students in the face.
114. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress, and for guiding curricular planning, are very good. They are major contributory factors to raising standards throughout the college. The college is correct in its belief that the implementation of its policy for assessment is one of the main driving forces behind improvements. Very good analyses of data, assessment of students' work, target setting and a wealth of other information positively influence most aspects of the college's life. These include professional development, the pastoral curriculum, students' progress and achievement, monitoring of teaching and learning, planning for development, and finance. Detailed statistics from a wide variety of sources are carefully and methodically analysed both to give baseline information on students' attainments and to predict likely outcomes of future accomplishments. Teachers use such information well to plan appropriate courses. Students use it well to measure their own progress against agreed targets. Students record their learning targets in their planners. They respond readily and knowledgeably when questioned about their current and expected levels of attainment. In doing so, they use the correct National Curriculum terminology, subdivided well to indicate progress over short periods of time. Such information does much to motivate students and helps them to take pertinent decisions about their own learning.
115. Teachers know the learning needs of students with special educational needs well. The learning support department's document of advice includes information on students' needs as well as strategies that should be used to address them. As a result, students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and learn at an appropriate pace across the full range of subjects. Students achieve well in English because they receive particularly close attention in the small teaching groups of lower attaining students in which most of them are placed. In Years 7 to 9, students make good progress in improving their reading skills through use of computer-based individual learning programmes in withdrawal sessions in the learning support department.
116. The college's practices satisfy all statutory requirements for assessment. Most departments operate good systems, using the data available to them very well to inform their curricular planning. The history and geography departments, in particular, operate very good systems of assessment. In both subjects, very good marking is a major feature. Through this, students receive valuable feedback that enables them to understand fully their attainment, progress and targets. Both subjects make very effective use of data from assessment to match learning situations to students' needs. In many subjects, students are actively involved in the good practice of reviewing their own progress and planning for improvement. Such routines are very good in ICT. Parents receive good and informative reports at regular intervals. They have many opportunities of discussing their children's academic and personal welfare at parental consultation sessions. A most noteworthy feature of the college's

practices in assessment is that it links the pastoral and academic systems very well to benefit students.

117. Procedures for the assessment of students with special educational needs are good. The annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are effective. They draw upon a wide range of professional opinion and involve consultation with parents or carers and students. Data about assessment over time is included in students' records and enables the progress of statemented students to be tracked closely as they move through the college. Targets set for students with special educational needs in Year 7 are clear, concise, challenging and attainable. In other years, however, targets are not of such good quality. They sometimes lack specificity and contain insufficiently clear strategies for improvement. In Year 10, the learning support department has initiated a new style of individual education plans that are referenced to the stages of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs introduced in 2002.
118. Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise for the quality of care provided for visually impaired students. The visual impairment co-ordinator begins to forge relationships of trust with students as soon as possible. Close liaison with the local authority's adviser for visual impairment means that pupils in primary schools may make their first visit to the college in Year 5. These visits provide a gentle and sensitive introduction to the college's environment and resources. Students in Year 7 receive awareness-raising activities in order to increase their understanding of the experience of their visually impaired peers. The college recognises that, in spite of these efforts, there are occasions when sighted students lack sensitivity and may be mean to their visually impaired peers.

Sixth form

Assessment

119. The use of assessment to promote students' learning is very good. The very effective procedures for assessment that operate in Years 7 to 11 continue in Years 12 and 13. They are adapted to meet the needs of more mature students and the requirements of further and higher education. Students' attainment, progress and achievement are monitored very well and, as a result, most students make good progress. Students often review their own progress and make decisions about what to do next to improve. This is particularly so in the vocational courses and is an important factor in maintaining a good rate of progress for many students. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their students' strengths and shortcomings. They give them sensitive and constructive advice about how to improve performances. Teachers respond very well to the information obtained through a variety of appropriate practices for assessment, by adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of individual students. The care of sixth form students who have special educational needs matches the very good quality of care the college provides for such students in Years 7 to 11.

Advice, support and guidance

120. The quality of advice and guidance for sixth formers is good. Students know that they can obtain advice and support from their tutors and subject teachers as well as from senior and other staff in the college. Students benefit from a good programme of induction that includes taster lessons. The programme is common to the entire confederation. Close co-operation among the member colleges ensures that students

are monitored properly and supported well, no matter which site they attend for lessons. There is good liaison over attendance, for example. Teachers at the other colleges will telephone or fax Stoke Damerel College if one of its students fails to attend a lesson without giving a proper explanation. Procedures for improving attendance are satisfactory. The college has just transferred sixth form records of attendance on to a computerised system to help it to monitor students' attendance more closely in the future. Procedures to promote the health and safety of students operate effectively.

121. The college makes effective use of good reporting procedures to ensure that students and their parents or carers are fully informed about students' academic and personal development. Arrangements for supporting students' applications for further or higher education and employment are good.
122. The survey of students' views was critical of the provision for advice on careers and courses of higher education. One third of the respondents felt that they had not received adequate information on these matters. However, during the inspection, students in both Year 12 and Year 13 praised the quality of careers guidance and the help that they receive from members of staff. Inspectors agree with these views. Pastoral support is good. It is enhanced by very good relationships between students and teachers. Tutors and subject teachers are willing to give up their time after college to provide advice and guidance. As one student said, "Staff go the extra mile to help you." The tutorial programme in the sixth form has a good focus on careers and opportunities in higher education. Students find it particularly helpful in relation to applications for jobs and interviews. The programme of mock interviews is a strength of the programme. Currently, students who are following vocational courses get better access to guidance than those who are taking A-level and AS-level courses. The latter do not get the chance to participate in the personal and social education course for sixth formers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

123. The college's partnership with parents is good. Parents who completed the inspection's survey or attended the meeting with the registered inspector have favourable opinions of the college. The majority approve of what it provides for their children and are satisfied with all aspects of its work. Parents are especially happy with the college's expectations regarding hard work, and the approachability of its staff. They also like the way that it helps children to become more mature and responsible. On the other hand, more than a quarter of answers to the survey expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of homework that children are given, and just under one fifth said that they were not happy with information on students' progress or the quality of co-operation between the college and parents. Inspectors broadly agree with the views of the majority. They find that there are strong and effective links between home and college that make a positive contribution to students' learning and progress. Information for parents is good and the college seeks to work closely with them. There is some substance in complaints about homework. The amount and quality of work set are inconsistent across the college. Homework is not used as effectively in Years 7 to 9 as in Years 10 and 11 to extend students' learning.
124. The college keeps parents informed well about its work and routines. The college and sixth form prospectuses, the annual report of the governing body, and the booklet for options in Year 9 all give clear and comprehensive summaries of the college's curriculum, expectations and achievements. Parents also receive good information through briefing meetings, such as the 'GCSE Maximising Achievement Evening'.

This event gives good guidance on the demands of examinations and the ways in which parents can help their children to do well in them. Student planners are available as a good ongoing line of communication between the college and home. They contain much information on homework. The vast majority of students make very good use of them to record the work that they are expected to do and their targets for improvement. Tutors check and sign planners every week. Students and teachers make more effective use of planners now than at the time of the previous inspection and exploit their potential more fully.

125. Information for parents about students' progress is good. The college has thorough arrangements for advising parents of problems and seeking their co-operation in a joint effort to solve them. For example, it is prompt in informing them when their child's attendance falls below acceptable levels. There is a regular flow of information on students' academic progress. Parents receive interim subject reports during the course of the year. These give a clear picture of students' levels of attainment in Year 10 and 11 as they contain predicted GCSE grades. Parents are able to discuss their child's progress with subject teachers at consultation evenings. The college has very good procedures for sounding out parents' views on the organisation and usefulness of these evenings. Parents value them and say that consultations with teachers give them the information that they want. End of year reports on progress are good. They contain information on the topics covered during the year, the skills acquired by the student, and assessments carried out by the college. They also provide a good account of the student's personal and social development. The quality of diagnostic and formative comment varies among subjects and teachers. Some subject reports, such as those for modern foreign languages in Year 10, set precise targets for improvement that help the student to make progress. Other subjects sometimes provide vague suggestions and exhortations, as in the case of a science report that advises the student to 'work as well as you can in all three subject areas'.
126. The college is well aware that strong parental support enhances students' attainment and progress. Therefore, it works hard to develop links with parents and to recruit them as partners in their children's learning. It has very good procedures for finding out what parents think and taking their views into account. It has put in place a good formal agreement that sets out entitlements and responsibilities of college, home and students. In the home section, parents promise that their children will attend college regularly. They also undertake to attend consultation evenings, sign student planners and to support their children's work at college and at home. The colleges' measures are extensive but not wholly effective. The contribution that families make to learning and the life of the college is satisfactory but has some weaknesses. Some parents have low aspirations and place little value on education and qualifications. In extreme cases they are unco-operative over attendance and condone unauthorised absence. The main strength is the high level of parental approval and support for the college. The majority of parents want their children to learn and do well. They attend parents' evenings and college performances, and they read and sign student planners. They will co-operate with the college if problems arise over their child's attendance, behaviour or work. Parents contribute positively to the life of the college by supporting the college association. The association is active in fund raising and also acts as means for communicating parents' views to the principal. A small number of parents are directly involved with learning in the college. In the 'Help at Hand' initiative, for example, parents work with 12 children in Years 7 and 8 in order to improve their reading skills. Their contribution has substantially enhanced the progress made by these students.

127. Parents and carers are invited to, and all are involved in, the annual reviews of students with statements of special educational needs. They are kept fully informed about their child's progress towards the targets set out as part of the review process.
128. Students in the sixth form have positive views towards the college. They value the good range of learning opportunities available.
129. The college has made good progress since the previous inspection. It has maintained good links with parents and improved the use of student planners. The previous report did not give a clear judgement on the overall quality of information on progress, but did comment on the lack of specific targets in end of year reports. This is still a weakness in some subject reports.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

130. The college's leadership and management are good. Under the leadership of the previous principal, the college improved its academic standards. The college is an effective institution that provides a good quality of education for students of all backgrounds and capabilities. When students enter the college, their standards are below average. As a result of good teaching, students' achievements are at least satisfactory at the end of Year 9 and good at the end of Year 11. Although attainment is below average, understandably so in view of the large number of students in the area who attend selective grammar schools, students' achievement by the end of Year 11 is good.
131. Overall, the college has made good improvement since its previous inspection. In respect of the five key issues for action that were identified in the previous report, progress has been good. The use of the students' planners has improved and is now a good aid to learning. The quality of teaching has improved, is more consistent and is good. The problems in respect of inappropriate timetabling and unsatisfactory deployment of teachers have been corrected. Although attendance has remained slightly below average, efforts to improve it are good. Finally, there is now a close and effective link between the planning in departments and the whole college's development plan.
132. The interim principal, who has taken on this temporary post as recently as January 2002, provides very effective leadership that has secured the commitment and support of staff to raise standards further. Having been vice-principal at the college, the interim principal has a very good awareness of the college's strengths and weaknesses and has made a major contribution to the strong culture of self-evaluation that is a considerable strength of the college. The response from staff at all levels in the college to the new, participative and open style of management is very positive. Several students and many staff and governors said that they welcomed the new style of management created by the interim principal. They are correct in their assertions that the interim principal gets things done, has the respect of colleagues and maintains good relationships with students and staff.
133. The caring approach of the interim principal is evident in the way staff who experience personal or professional difficulties receive sensitive and helpful support. The tough side has appeared in the determination to get sixth form students to focus closely on their academic performance. For example, the removal of a pool table from the sixth form common room did not meet with approval from all members of the sixth form but several students said that the decision was appropriate and helped to improve the climate for learning.

134. The interim principal sets a very good personal example to students and staff and provides very clear and firm direction for the college's work. The senior management team provides good support and effective management. Through their links with different departments, members of the senior management team are fully aware of what the college does well and how it can improve. They communicate their findings to the particular committees of the governing body with which they are separately linked, so that the governing body is in a good position to monitor and evaluate developments.
135. The college's aims are evident in its daily life. A particularly successful feature is the strong commitment to equality of opportunity and the social inclusion of all students. This feeling of inclusion is an important contributory factor towards the good achievements made by students of all backgrounds and levels of attainment, particularly the large number of students who have special educational needs, the few students who speak English as an additional language and those who are of a minority ethnic heritage. It is further shown by the very good provision for visually impaired students, who not only integrate comfortably into the college's activities but also are often consulted about their particular needs. Although no students from travellers' families were present during the inspection, the college makes appropriate provision for these students when they are in the locality. Students with behavioural difficulties are managed well by most staff. The college is successful in making all students feel equally welcome and valued.
136. The college is managed well. In recognition of its effective managerial systems and approaches it holds the award of 'Investor in People'. Through its good work in careers education and good links with industry the college has gained recognition as 'Investor in Careers' and as an 'Investor in Education Business Partnerships'. The successful introduction and implementation of the system of performance management have led to teachers having to account more clearly for standards in their classes and to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The programme for staff development is very successful in helping teachers to develop their skills in management of classes and helps them to develop a wider variety of teaching methods. Arrangements for induction of new staff are very good. They help new staff to settle in quickly and easily and contribute to good continuity of students' learning.
137. The governing body carries out its duties effectively and responsibly, apart from making sufficient provision for religious education and for a daily act of collective worship for all students. It contains a good and wide range of expertise and is very supportive of the work of the college. The chair and vice-chair of governors are particularly well informed as a result of frequent visits to the college for meetings with the interim principal and other staff for informal discussions about the work of the college. The statutory committees are in place and meet as required. Governors keep a close eye on the college's performance and have a good knowledge of its strengths and areas for development. They take effective action to make improvements, as shown, for example, by the allocation of additional funding to provide extra welfare assistance in support of the college's policy for social inclusion.
138. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the college's performance are very good. The programme for review and evaluation provides the senior management team with a very good awareness of the areas that need to be improved. Very good systems for tracking the progress of students and of subject departments by the senior management team are in place and help to raise standards.

139. The college has taken an active approach to implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy. An important element is the very effective and extensive link with primary schools that ensures a smooth transfer into the college. The Academic Council of Schools, a collaboration of the college with its principal partner primary schools, strengthens this link.
140. Following appropriate consultation, the governing body has prepared a comprehensive and appropriate college development plan that sets out suitable priorities for improvement. These priorities are linked closely to the college's annual budget. The college development plan suitably contains a clear statement of how the governing body will operate the principles of best value in all its spending decisions. There are also detailed developmental plans for every department. These clearly relate to the college's priorities. The plans provide effective direction for the college's further improvement.
141. The college usually sets appropriate and achievable targets for students' achievements in national tests for students at the end of Year 9 and for GCSE examinations. However, some of the targets set for GCSE performance in 2002 are comfortable rather than very challenging targets.
142. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is good in nearly all subjects, though it is unsatisfactory in religious education. In geography and music, the recently appointed heads of department provide good leadership that is beginning to show results in terms of students' improved achievement, although some poor teaching in music impedes improvement. Heads of department have improved their managerial skills through the college's very effective programme of in-service training. Arrangements for monitoring the classroom work of the department and taking effective action to make improvements are very good in art and design and geography and good in most other subjects. The college has a considerable amount of very useful and informative data relating to the assessment of students. The data is analysed carefully. The results are shared with staff so that realistic and suitably challenging targets for improvement are made.
143. The management of provision for students with visual impairments is very good. The management of the provision for other students with special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides effective management of the learning support department and of the procedures for the support of students on the college's register of special educational needs. As a result, the college has been prepared well for the introduction of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs in January 2002. Support teachers and teaching assistants are deployed appropriately in order to provide the required support for the students with statements of special educational needs. There are sufficient numbers of support staff for this purpose. Roles and responsibilities within the learning support department are clear and understood well by staff. The college pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs. The register of special educational needs is effectively organised and up to date.
144. The financial administration of the college is of a high standard. Detailed information is provided for the governing body that enables governors to make effective decisions when preparing the college's budget and in subsequent monitoring and evaluation of expenditure. The monthly budgetary statements include detailed and appropriate information about confirmed expenditure under each budgetary heading, as well as future commitments. Members of the finance committee are experienced in interpreting these monitoring statements and receive professional support from the

college's financial manager and the principal. For instance, they prepare analyses relating to cost benefit when the college is considering investment in new courses or additional staffing.

145. The finance committee has recently reviewed the college's policy for finance. The policy provides secure financial systems for the ordering and checking of goods and for the collection and banking of money. The college complies with the controls recommended by the City Council for the ordering of larger items. Furthermore, students take all cash contributions for college trips directly to reception where they are issued with a receipt. Teachers therefore are relieved of the administrative burden and can concentrate on the organisation and educational benefits of the trip. The college's budget has not been audited for two years. Its financial systems were described as good in the previous auditors' report. Specific grants such as those for special educational needs, inclusion, literacy, and the professional development of staff are all spent as stipulated.
146. The interim principal possesses a very good knowledge and understanding of financial processes. As a result, the college has developed a very effective cycle of financial planning. This ensures that the college's budget reflects the educational priorities established in the college's development plan. In turn, departmental and subject plans also include whole-college priorities, so that there is an agreed consistency of approach across the college. For instance, during the past year, the college decided to increase expenditure on computers for students' use and also increased the allocation of funds to departmental capitation. Each committee of the governing body shares the responsibility for the monitoring of expenditure on identified priorities.
147. Members of the finance committee ensure they obtain value for money before committing the college to expenditure, particularly with long-term contracts. When contracts are renewed, such as those for photocopying, for cleaning and for the servicing of computers, they recognise that the most effective budgetary decisions are not necessarily the cheapest. They place importance on the quality of services as well as the cost.
148. The college manages its adequate resources of staffing, accommodation and resources for learning very well.

Staffing

149. The provision of staffing is satisfactory. The qualifications and deployment of teachers and supporting staff are sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum. The college has experienced a high turnover of staff in the last two years but has managed to recruit sufficient, suitably qualified staff in all departments other than in modern foreign languages and music. Occasionally, as in physical education, the use of non-specialist teachers limits the range of learning activities and hinders progress. Technical and support staff are appropriately qualified and play a very good, supporting role in, for example, science and art and design. The team of teaching assistants makes a very positive contribution to the provision for students with special educational needs. The secretarial, clerical, catering and site maintenance staff contribute very effectively to the good, day-to-day running and ethos of the college. A very good spirit of teamwork amongst all the staff is a feature of the college.

Accommodation

150. Accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum satisfactorily. However, it has some shortcomings. In the humanities subjects, there are only five rooms for eight teachers. As a result, three of the teachers conduct many of their lessons in other parts of the school so that suitable resources for learning are not always readily available. In music, the inadequate sound proofing means that noise from the practice rooms sometimes has an adverse effect on learning in the main rooms and vice-versa.
151. Some classrooms are too small for the size of teaching groups and, accordingly, restrict the range of learning activities that can be undertaken. Most students show respect for the college's buildings, but there is some graffiti and vandalism; for example, in several science laboratories some taps are broken and cupboards damaged. Good standards of caretaking in the college contribute positively to the college's good ethos. Throughout the college, displays are used effectively to celebrate the work of the students.

Resources

152. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory. It meets curricular needs in almost all subjects. However, in music the lack of recording equipment hinders progress and the pianos are in need of repair. In geography and science, the need to share textbooks slows the pace of learning slightly. Most departments have access to sufficient computers within the college to enable students to practise their ICT skills and to enhance their work in subjects. However, there are no facilities for ICT in geography and music for students to use to extend their learning. In science, students have insufficient access to computers to carry out activities involving data logging.
153. The overall funding received per student by the college is high. However, the social and economic background of the immediate catchment area of the college is diverse, and includes areas of high social deprivation. When factors such as the achievement of students are taken into consideration, the college is an effective unit, and continues to provide good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

154. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The recently appointed head of sixth form receives very good support from the acting vice-principal and co-ordinates the work of all staff well. There is a shared commitment among staff to supporting students and to helping them to reach their potential levels of attainment and personal development. The work of those who teach the sixth formers and of the tutors reflects fully the aims of the whole college. Regular meetings of sixth form teachers and tutors and very effective procedures for assessment help to identify and tackle under-achievement at an early stage. Standards in the sixth form are rising as a result of the college's commitment to improving further the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form and through its success in developing students' confidence and self-esteem.
155. The governing body keeps a careful eye on the work of the sixth form. They are proud of the growth in numbers of students and of the good achievements of many students.

156. With the full support of the governing body, the college works closely with two neighbouring institutions in the provision of sixth form courses in a confederated arrangement. A good system has been developed to decide on the cost-effectiveness of individual courses before these are introduced in Year 12. The range of courses offered remains wide by combining groups from the three institutions when numbers otherwise would be too low to allow some courses to be viable. To enable these confederated courses to run efficiently, the sixth form timetables of the three colleges are in close alignment. This arrangement works well because of the co-operation and commitment of the teachers, some of whom teach 'twilight' sessions after college so that all students are able to benefit from the greater curricular opportunities provided by the confederation.
157. The confederation of three sixth form colleges is very effective. This collaboration is long standing. Co-operation among the three colleges is based on mutual regard and well-organised day-to-day arrangements. The benefits to the students are evident in the extended curricular opportunities and the advantages of working and meeting with larger groupings of students while still having the continuity of care and support in their home college. Regular, formal meetings take place between senior managers and sixth form co-ordinators from each college. Informal contacts between teachers are an important supplement to the well-planned systems for monitoring students' progress across the confederation.
158. The college has carried out an audit of the strengths of the sixth form and the areas for improvement. Strengths identified include the opportunities and challenges within the range of subjects on offer. Areas for development include the further development of teaching of key skills. The provision of counselling, advice, guidance and support is good. There are strong and effective links with providers of higher education.
159. Governors are kept fully informed of developments within the sixth form. Agenda items appear regularly, with reports to governors and periodic updates, for example, of curricular plans and budgets. As a result, governors are able to make pertinent decisions regarding the sixth form from an informed basis.

Resources

160. Resources available for learning in the sixth form broadly match those in the rest of the college. Governors have a good overview of financial affairs. Planning is based on realistic budgetary data. Priorities are assessed carefully before spending decisions are taken. Effects of spending are scrutinised in relation to improved performance and as a result, good value for money is obtained. Good use is made of good staffing, adequate resources and suitable accommodation for the teaching of courses. The sixth form is cost-effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

161. In order to raise standards and to make further improvements to the quality of education, the college should include the following key issues in its action plan.

- (1) Raise standards in religious education by
 - meeting statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11;
 - improving the quality of management, teaching and learning in the subject.(Paragraphs: 2,8,19,21,60 and 65)
- (2) Raise standards in music by
 - making the quality of teaching more consistently good;
 - improving students' skills in singing, playing, listening and composing;
 - providing better resources for learning, including ICT;
 - improving the accommodation so that noise from adjoining classrooms does not hinder learning.(Paragraphs: 2,19,21,60,62,92 and 243)
- (3) Improve students' skills in writing and spelling by
 - ensuring that all subjects contribute fully and in a consistent way to the development of students' skills in literacy;
 - evaluating across all subjects how well the methods of teaching literacy are helping these students to improve.(Paragraphs: 31,32,35,69,75,95,166,167,169,177,186,210,216,224,237 and 239).
- (4) Help students who have behavioural difficulties to improve their behaviour and learning by ensuring that all staff manage these students well.
(Paragraphs: 5,25,47,65,67,69,179,211 and 238).
- (5) Intensify efforts to improve attendance in order to reduce the under-achievement of persistent absentees.
(Paragraphs: 5,13,51,176,179,219, 228 and 248).

Sixth form

- (1) Improve students' skills in studying independently so that they can extend and enrich their learning in many subjects.
(Paragraphs: 50,87,265,266,273,278,280,291,293,303,325,330,331,337 and 342).
- (2) Meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education.
- (3) Improve attendance in order to reduce the under-achievement of persistent absentees.
(Paragraphs: 272 and 335).

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students.

(Paragraphs: 97).

- Ensure that the teaching of numeracy is consistent across subjects.
(Paragraphs: 33, 76 and 95).
- Improve the consistency and quality of homework in Years 7 to 9.
(Paragraphs: 66).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	163
	Sixth form	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		78

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	3	37	65	48	6	4	0
Percentage	2	23	40	29	4	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	10	26	16	0	1	0
Percentage	2	19	48	30	0	2	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1194	215
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	325	28

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	29	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	245	52

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	35

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	95
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Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	122	111	233

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	68	74
	Girls	72	62	59
	Total	129	130	133
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (51)	56 (51)	57 (41)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (10)	21 (24)	21 (9)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	73	60
	Girls	51	83	63
	Total	88	156	123
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	38 (38)	67 (57)	53 (65)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	4 (5)	26 (20)	13 (17)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	127	112	239

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	112	123
	Girls	49	96	106
	Total	92	208	229
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	38 (28)	87 (91)	96 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	33.0 (31.4)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	18	28	46

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	20	40	60
	Average point score per candidate	11.6	14.7	13.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	18	28	46	5	14	19
	Average point score per candidate	10.3	14.9	13.1	9.6	12.2	11.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	4
White	1377
Any other minority ethnic group	10

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	36	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	89.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	838

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	23.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4.9
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.9
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3 954 490
Total expenditure	3 782 946
Expenditure per student	2703
Balance brought forward from previous year	97 691
Balance carried forward to next year	269 235

FTE means full-time equivalent

* Includes teachers on temporary contracts.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1409
Number of questionnaires returned	167

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	58	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	6	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	53	16	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	53	23	4	1
The teaching is good.	33	60	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	49	10	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	36	2	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	40	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	34	51	10	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	37	49	5	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	55	3	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	52	5	1	8

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to pass on their enthusiasm for English to students.
- Good leadership and management of the department are helping to raise standards in English.
- Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.
- Students' work in media studies is good in all years.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in English are too far below those in English literature.
- The choice of materials for students in lessons does not always support good learning.
- Teachers do not consistently make good use of the final minutes of lessons.

162. As a result of the good teaching they receive and their positive attitudes in lessons, students achieve well. Most students make good gains in English compared with their attainment levels on entry to the college, although work seen during the inspection and recent test and examination results are below national expectations and averages.
163. Students enter the college with levels of attainment that are consistently below or well below average. The 2001 National Curriculum tests for students at the end of Year 9 were below the national average but above those achieved in similar schools. These results have improved steadily over the last three years and exceeded the national improvement in English. Over this time, the performance of boys against national figures for boys has been slightly better than that of girls against national figures for girls. Students with special educational needs receive good support in lessons and make good progress in Years 7 to 9.
164. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the proportion of students in English achieving grades A*-C was well below national averages. In English literature, it was below national averages. In both subjects, results were close to national averages for those achieving grades A*-G. In media studies results were close to national averages for the percentage of students gaining grades A*-C. Comparing GCSE English grades in 2001 against levels the students achieved two years earlier in National Curriculum tests shows that students made gains similar to the national rate of improvement. Gains were greater than the average of those made at similar schools. This represents mainly good achievement across the two years, although the lower proportion of grades A*-C in English than in English literature is rightly a concern that the department is anxious to address. Students' results in English literature matched their results in other subjects but their results in English language were below their average grades in other subjects. Those students with special educational needs who are taught in small groups and are entered for the Certificate of Achievement also make good progress because they are supported well in class and receive additional help with basic skills.

165. Students with visual impairment and the small number of students for whom English is an additional language receive very good support in lessons. As a result they make good progress in all years.
166. Work seen during the inspection is below that normally seen in all years. Levels of accuracy, especially spelling, are often low in the work of many students, including those whose work is otherwise of a high standard. In Years 7 to 9, students are generally confident in oral work, and many make thoughtful and lengthy contributions to discussions in class. Opportunities for reading aloud are limited but students, including those with special educational needs, show in their individual reading in class that they can maintain concentration and read with enjoyment. Students make less use of ICT in the preparation and presentation of their work than is the case in many schools. Higher attaining students produce an impressive range of writing, including letters, instructions, stories and responses to literature. The work of all students in media studies is particularly strong, showing good understanding of technical terms and a clear grasp of concepts such as deconstruction. Year 7 students, for example those working on play scripts, have good understanding of how writers build character through dialogue and description. In Year 9, students produce well-constructed and sustained stories, which make imaginative use of language.
167. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining students show mature skills in discussion. In a Year 11 lesson on persuasive writing techniques, for example, students showed admirable regard for each other's wish to contribute. Lower attaining students have limited speaking and listening skills. In one lesson, in which students were working on leisure activities, there was much shouting out, interjections were very short and the atmosphere was not conducive to good learning. In their perceptive and sensitive writing about works such as William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', higher attaining students show that they have very good understanding of how writers build up atmosphere through character, plot and description. More students than in earlier years, and especially boys, use ICT extensively in their written assignments. Media-based work, both in GCSE English and in the media studies GCSE optional course, is consistently good, as seen in the work on a youth magazine, the coursework on film genre and the analysis of advertisements in magazines. Middle and lower attaining students generally present written work less consistently well. Some students struggle to understand the way in which language has an impact upon the meaning of poetry. In the work on 'The Simpsons', few students understood how to analyse humour. Poor spelling is still evident in many students' work, even when they demonstrate the ability to write powerfully in prose and poetry.
168. Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In close to three out of four lessons, teaching was good or better. In almost half of the lessons seen teaching was very good or excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and pass on their enthusiasm to many students. They mark work very conscientiously, making good use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades so that students are very clear about their standards of work. Teachers write detailed comments and usually set targets for improvement. Teachers' management of classes is mostly very good. Teachers have positive relationships with students who, as a result, enjoy their English lessons and are usually very well motivated. In the best lessons, teachers focus on clear objectives for learning and choose engaging and well-pitched materials that encourage all students to get fully involved in activities. The pace of learning here is brisk and students enjoy the challenge. Some of the lessons for small groups of students with special educational needs are amongst the best. In these lessons teachers have very high expectations, plan strategies for learning carefully and encourage students to become independent learners. Where teaching is

less successful, the materials to support learning are unengaging or too difficult for students, or the objectives for learning are too vague so that students do not clearly understand what it is that they are meant to achieve. In many lessons, teachers do not make good use of the final minutes of the lesson. In a few lessons, higher attaining students have little to occupy them once they have accomplished the set tasks. In a few Year 9 lessons, activities designed to prepare students for national tests are presented unimaginatively so that levels of involvement drop. In some lessons for students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11, objectives for learning are unclear and students carry out tasks without understanding the purpose behind what they are doing.

169. The lack of a coherent policy for the teaching of literacy across all subjects prevents students from making the best possible progress in improving their literacy, and particularly their spelling and writing. Although students have below average skills in reading and writing, many of them are confident speakers. Lively discussions are a feature of lessons in many subjects. Written work is below average because levels of accuracy, especially in spelling, are lower than might be expected, even amongst higher attaining students. Departmental practice for teaching literacy across the curriculum is inconsistent. Good practice in developing students' reading occurs in modern foreign languages and English, in which students are encouraged to use dictionaries, and programmes of study include using the library. Students read aloud in design and technology and history, but elsewhere, class teachers often miss this opportunity for developing their students' reading by doing the reading themselves. In many subjects students seldom write at length and therefore have only limited scope for developing skills. In some subjects such as ICT, geography and history, teachers give good support for students' writing, either through careful marking of errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation or through offering suggested frameworks on which students can construct their written work.
170. Leadership and management of the department are good. Improvement since the previous inspection is good in results in national tests for students at the end of Year 9. Achievement relative to students' attainment on entry to the college is good. The quality of teaching has also improved. This has led in turn to improved standards of behaviour by students in the classroom. Since the previous inspection schemes of work have been thoroughly revised to take account of changes in the National Curriculum and national strategies for improving literacy. The departmental handbook sets out clearly the educational direction for the work of the department. Systems for monitoring and supporting students' progress are good. English teachers work well together and share a common commitment to improving students' standards of attainment.

Drama

171. The overall provision in drama is very good. All students in Years 7 to 9 have drama lessons. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Teachers succeed in passing on their enthusiasm for drama to many of their students. Students enjoy their work in drama and, because of these positive attitudes and the very good teaching they receive, they achieve well. In all years, students show good knowledge of technical vocabulary. They are very comfortable in discussion with terms such as 'spontaneous improvisation', 'scenario' and 'thought tracking'. Standards of work seen in lessons were consistently above average. Compared with their standards of attainment when they enter the college, the levels of work in drama demonstrated by students at the end of Year 9 represent very good achievement. GCSE drama is a popular optional subject in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2001 were above the

national average. Almost one in five students gained A* or A grades. Students' results represent very good achievement in building on standards of attainment when students began Year 10. Students readily assume responsibility in lessons. Presentations are of a high standard and incorporate acting, designing sets, lighting and the use of properties. Students enhance their cultural and social development in much of the work in drama, as seen, for example, in the Year 10 lesson on the outcast in society.

172. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Schemes of work are tightly focused and help students to concentrate on ways of improving the standards of their work. Written work plays an important part. Good emphasis upon evaluative and theoretical aspects of the subject helps to explain why GCSE results have been so good in recent years. Extra-curricular activities are very good and enable students to enrich their experiences in drama. The department organises college productions and theatre visits in collaboration with the expressive arts faculty. Good links have been forged with the Plymouth Arts Festival.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards of numeracy are improving as a result of the department's positive approach.
- The head of department provides clear educational direction. Teamwork is excellent.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- The regular and thorough monitoring of students' work helps them to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Students have too few opportunities to use computers and modern technology.
- Insufficient monitoring of teaching skills leads to a variation in the quality of teaching.
- Inconsistency in the application of departmental policies hinders learning.

173. Standards in mathematics when students enter the college are below the national average. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were well below average, and below those of students in similar schools. This represents unsatisfactory achievement for that group of students. However, the attainment of students currently in Year 9, though below that seen normally, represents satisfactory achievement. Teachers' assessments of standards predicted higher results. The average points' score for each year group has stayed the same for the past three years. Boys have performed consistently better than girls in the past three years, but the gap is closing. Over this period, standards in mathematics have been below those in English and science.
174. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001, the proportion of students gaining grades in the range A*-C was well below the national average, but showed a considerable improvement on the results in 2000. Results matched those in English language and were below those in science. A high proportion of students entered for the examination. The proportion of boys gaining grades A*-G was similar to the national average, but for the girls this figure was below average. Boys attained better results than girls, as they had when these students were in Year 9. The results represent satisfactory improvement overall when compared with the results that students obtained in Year 9. Students attained broadly similar grades in mathematics as in their other subjects.

175. In work seen during the inspection, standards were better than those achieved in recent tests, but were still below average. Much of the work was closely monitored and supported by teachers. Students fared less well when required to use their own initiative under examination conditions. Students are grouped by attainment soon after entry to the college. Class numbers are high and rooms are of moderate size. These factors have a negative impact on learning because they restrict the range of learning activities. Higher attaining students receive good teaching in all years and achieve well. The achievement of lower attaining students is less consistent.
176. From the beginning of Year 7, students are provided with a range of topics across all the attainment targets of the National Curriculum. They are slow to learn the value of working in silence. The accuracy of their work and their depth of understanding suffer as a result, as in a lesson on measuring angles. A higher attaining group in Year 8 was provided with a very challenging exercise on forming algebraic equations. They showed commendable persistence in attempting to overcome their difficulties. Lower attaining students also work well to solve equations by inverse operations and make good progress. Many lessons in Years 7 to 9 begin with an effective numeracy starter to get the students thinking mathematically. This worked particularly well when there was a direct link with the main topic of the lesson. Students in a higher attaining group in Year 9 showed an excellent attitude to their work in a lesson introducing Pythagoras' rule for right-angled triangles. Their learning was very good as a result. They clearly understood the concept of the square and the square root of a number. By Year 11, there is a wider gap between the attainment of higher and lower attaining students. This is caused in part by the less regular attendance of students in lower attaining groups. Students in a lower attaining group in Year 10 failed to concentrate for the whole of the lesson when calculating angles in a triangle, and their learning was unsatisfactory. By contrast, the working atmosphere in a lesson on quadratic equations with a higher attaining group was far more purposeful, and learning was very good.
177. Teachers in the mathematics department have responded very positively to the national priority given to the development of numeracy skills. Regular practice in mental mathematics occurs in lessons. Teachers discourage the use of calculators unless it is appropriate. The contribution to the college's literacy initiative is less effective. Key words are displayed, but not always referred to during the lesson. Students have limited opportunities to write and explain, using their own words, or to pronounce new words. The use of computers to enhance students' learning is inconsistent across the department, even though it is clearly integrated into the scheme of work. Teachers make insufficient use of the opportunities available to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
178. The provision for numeracy across other subjects is satisfactory. However, teachers in different subjects use inconsistent methods and approaches that sometimes cause confusion, particularly among lower attaining students. A draft policy has been drawn up within the mathematics department for discussion at a whole-college training day. This day is intended to raise the level of debate about numeracy and to point out the responsibility that all teachers have to contribute to the development of students' numeracy skills. A few departments already make a useful contribution to students' use of number. For instance, in science, students frequently use graphs and formulae especially in Years 10 and 11. In ICT, students use problem solving and number when using spreadsheets. In design and technology they use calculations when making artefacts and preparing food. The use and analysis of data are particularly evident in geography and physical education.

179. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall. In one of the lessons seen, teaching was less than satisfactory. On balance, it is good in Years 10 and 11, particularly in higher attaining classes. Learning is satisfactory throughout the college. The effect of the good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is less than it should be because of the unsatisfactory attendance among students in these year groups that hinders continuity of learning. Teaching has a number of strengths, in particular, the willingness of teachers to listen to advice about improving their skills. Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding of their subject to provide work at the correct level for individual students. Planning of the content of lessons is thorough, but less thought is given to strategies for improving learning. The management of students is satisfactory. Teachers are not always effective when dealing with students who have challenging behaviour, which can result in some distraction for those students who are working. Marking varies from very good to satisfactory. The best examples encourage students to raise their standards and include advice about how to do so. Homework is set regularly, but is not always clearly related to the lesson's topic. Areas for improvement in teaching include more regular use of praise, more frequent provision of work to enable higher attaining students to progress at their best pace, and a better balance between class teaching and students working independently. Students with special educational needs, including those with visual impairment, are well known by their teachers. They receive effective support, make steady progress and their achievements are satisfactory. Students of ethnic minority heritage make generally good progress.
180. The head of department leads by example and provides a good educational direction for the department. The very good teamwork in the department encourages teachers to discuss their lessons, their successes, and what could be done to improve. Overall, teachers are relatively inexperienced. They are very committed to their work and to providing good learning opportunities for students. The system of performance management is established, but insufficient observations of lessons within the mathematics department occur to inform teachers' discussions about teaching skills. The frequent and regular assessment of students' work helps teachers to identify students who are under-achieving, and those doing better than expected. The monitoring of data is good. It helps the department to compare its performance with national standards. The development plan is very detailed and ensures that all teachers are aware of both college and departmental priorities. In spite of the very detailed department handbook, there is inconsistency in practice across the department, for example, in the use of lesson summaries, in marking, in the quality of homework, and in the use of computers. As a result, students' progress varies from very good to satisfactory according to which teacher takes the class.
181. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards in national tests are at about the same level, but standards are improving based on the work seen during the inspection. Relationships between teachers and students remain good. Teaching has improved. Less unsatisfactory teaching takes place. The use of computers is still not regular or frequent enough. There is now more emphasis on investigative skills, which encourages students to use their initiative. The shared commitment of teachers within the department means that there is a good capacity for future success.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- GCSE results have improved. In 2001, they represented very good achievement for students.
- The good quality of teaching in Years 10 to 11 helps students to achieve well.
- Good leadership and management of the department contribute well to rising standards.
- Staff work well together and are committed to raising standards further.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 are below average.
- Some teaching in Years 7 to 9 is less than satisfactory
- Marking sometimes gives insufficient guidance to students about how to improve their work.
- There is not enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

182. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were below the national average for all schools nationally, but were above average when compared with similar schools. In the past few years, boys have achieved better results than girls at this stage. Between 1996 and 2001, standards were steadily declining. This trend was reversed in 2001 when results in the national tests improved considerably. In terms of average points score, the college's performance in science in 2001 was better than it was in mathematics and broadly similar to that in English.
183. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining GCSE results at grades A*-C was similar to the national average. However, when compared with similar schools these results were well above average. When compared with students' prior attainment in national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the results were much higher than expected. Boys' performance was much better than that of the girls. The results in 2001 show a substantial improvement from those of 2000. Students do better in science than they do in most of their other subjects.
184. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students enter the college with standards that are below the national average. Progress is most rapid in experimental science in which students quickly acquire many useful skills for carrying out experiments with a variety of scientific apparatus. Year 7 students investigate the effect of the design on a parachute's behaviour in a rather imprecise way. Students in Year 8 set up and carry out quite complex experiments, such as those designed to find the best conditions for an enzyme's action using albumen and pepsin, and an experiment to investigate the keeping qualities of various milks using resazurin. However, although most students understand how to do the experiments and perform them with good precision, some do this with little understanding of the theory behind what they are doing and why. As the course unfolds, students produce greater volumes of written work and cover scientific topics in more detail, resulting in increasing levels of skill and a greater range of knowledge. This was exemplified by a Year 9 lesson in which students were working on genetics. They could understand the consequences of meiosis together with the inheritance of dominant and recessive characters and link all this to the use of selective breeding in agriculture.
185. Standards in the work seen in Years 10 to 11 broadly match those expected nationally. They are not quite as good as those suggested by the very good GCSE results in 2001. Students achieve well. For example, most students in a top set in Year 11 showed a good understanding of how elements are arranged in the periodic table. They explained that elements in the same group have similar properties and that these properties change gradually from the top to the bottom of the group. In a

middle attaining class in Year 10, students made good progress in a lesson on forces in their understanding of the relationship between the driving speed of a car and its stopping distance. They knew that thinking distance and braking distance are very important for road safety. In a very good discussion, higher attaining students explained clearly the various factors affecting both the thinking and braking distance. This is better than would be expected in relation to their prior attainment. Students' practical and investigative skills continue to improve but are not quite as good as their scientific knowledge. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions or define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding and to evaluate their results. They seldom plan their own investigations and evaluate results. Students are generally good at carrying out experiments planned by the teachers. They understand the principles of fair testing, record observations well, take accurate measurements and present data in the form of charts and graphs.

186. Higher attaining students in the top groups often make good progress. However, teachers do not always provide work of sufficient challenge to extend these students fully. Students with special education needs are known well by their teachers, who modulate their approach and often produce work tailored to their needs. Students with special educational needs make steady progress in Years 7 to 9, but make good progress in Years 10 to 11. Many students lack confidence in using scientific terminology. Although most teachers help students to develop their literacy skills appropriately, this is not always done rigorously enough. Students' numeracy skills are below average. Their ICT skills, although improving, are generally not developed well, because of the lack of opportunity to use computers for data logging. The use of ICT is insufficiently monitored to ensure access and to ensure that it is used more as a tool for scientific and investigative work than merely to obtain information that could otherwise be obtained from textbooks.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There is more good teaching in Years 10 to 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, there is better achievement among the older students. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed was in Years 7 to 9. Differences in the quality of teaching in lessons produced marked differences in students' responses to learning. Most lessons are planned well and start with ensuring that what was learned in the previous lesson is effectively checked. They conclude with an evaluation of what has been learned. The better lessons show extensive involvement of students. Through skilful questioning, the teacher draws out their knowledge, amplifies it and synthesises it into useful extensions of their learning. When practical work is presented, students are involved in designing suitable experiments. When they set out, they are clear not only about what they are doing, and how, but more importantly, why. In the best lessons, questions are delivered with speed, skill and enthusiasm; explanations are clear and activities are interesting. This was seen to good effect in a Year 7 lesson about the movement of particles in solids, liquids and gases. As part of this interesting lesson, students engaged in a wide range of activities and experiments in which they had to make their own observations and explain what they had seen in terms of particle theory. Higher attaining students know that molecules of air cause pressure. They can explain why, when two Magdeburg hemispheres are put together and a vacuum created, they cannot be pulled apart. Students make the best progress when they are quickly involved in demanding work. Their progress is much slower when they receive too much guidance from teachers, with too few problem-solving activities and opportunities to write at length for themselves. In the less successful lessons, teachers do not manage the class well and students' understanding is not checked rigorously. Consequently, students set out on tasks which, to them, seem pointless and which they are unable to carry out effectively. In some practical experiments, they

follow a recipe to prove what they already know, rather than being given opportunities to discover science for themselves. The few instances of satisfactory or poor teaching were characterised by poor planning and insufficient learning, and in one lesson there was inadequate supervision of students during a practical experiment.

188. Marking is satisfactory. It is regular and frequent, but comments do not always give students a clear enough indication of what they have got wrong and what they need to do in order to improve. Homework is usually set and provides a useful extension to students' learning.
189. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Most concentrate well. Behaviour is generally good. The majority of students respond well to their science lessons, are co-operative with their teachers and help one another. Students clearly enjoy practical work, share equipment safely, and happily record their observations together. They answer questions mostly in a courteous manner and generally to the best of their ability. Students seldom ask questions to enquire more deeply into a topic and, accordingly, do not always maximise their progress in science.
190. The department runs a suitable course for lower attaining students in Years 10 to 11 that leads to a Certificate of Achievement in science. The teaching of these lessons is generally good and students are well motivated. The course gives students the chance to gain a GCSE qualification, if they make good progress during the course.
191. The science department is led and managed well. Teachers and technicians work well as a team. There is a clear aim to raise students' attainment. For example, the department runs a science week, in which a full and varied programme of activities stimulates students' interest in the subject. In addition, staff run a number of clubs and science workshops, in which students can receive extra help with any topics they find difficult. However, there is not yet enough sharing of the very good teaching skills which exist within the department to influence and improve the practice of other teachers. The new head of department has a good understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses and has drawn up a suitable development plan to tackle under-achievement and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The new departmental handbook is informative and provides a good framework for development and for everyday operation of the department. Although it sets out a number of good policies to raise attainment, the monitoring of their application is not rigorous enough to ensure that the policies achieve their maximum effectiveness. The curriculum is becoming better organised in all years, as new schemes of work come on stream. Schemes of work are rightly being linked to literacy, numeracy and ICT.
192. The laboratory technicians provide good support. Basic equipment for science is adequate, but there are shortages of larger items, partly because of the age of the equipment and much of it coming to the end of its useful life. Shortages of data-logging equipment restrict students' progress in using ICT. Accommodation is satisfactory but two laboratories need refurbishment and repairs to sinks and taps. The layout in several laboratories restricts the range of lesson activities. The quality and quantity of students' work on display are variable, but where they are good, they create an attractive working environment.
193. Overall, there has been a good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved, particularly the GCSE results. The use of ICT has improved but students still do not get hands-on experience of data logging. Assessment and recording procedures have improved.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching leads to good learning.
- Good organisation and planning help students to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- Students make insufficient use of ICT to enhance their work.
- A few students do not have a good knowledge of their own learning.

194. Between 1999 and 2001 the art department experienced severe staffing difficulties. Although these are now resolved, their effect on the learning of a large number of students was negative at the time and is still adversely affecting some students in Years 11 and 12.
195. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show attainment to be around the national average. Girls' results are a little better than those of boys. Bearing in mind the subjective nature of such assessments and their lack of standardisation, they are similar to the inspection's findings.
196. GCSE results for 2001 show that the proportion of students obtaining passes at grades A*-C was well below the national average. The proportion obtaining passes at grades A*-G was above the national average. Boys were above average at grades A*-G and girls were below. These results are considerably better than those of the previous year, showing an improving trend. However, performance indicators show that art and design was one of the subjects in which students performed least well. Nevertheless, this represents satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.
197. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Given that students have below average attainment on entry to the college, this is good achievement. Students are developing good powers of observation reflected, for example, in good drawings of faces in two dimensions in which students take appropriate care to place features correctly and to consider proportion. These ideas are carried forward into three dimensions in good models in card and in ceramics. Students' sketchbooks show satisfactory development of the use of colour and colour blending, imitating, for example, pointillist technique (applying colour in massed dots) and printing from simple intaglio (incised) and relief (projecting) designs on tiles. Students have a reasonable knowledge of artists and their work, for instance Picasso, Lichtenstein, Jim Dine, Jasper Johns and Dali, and movements such as Cubism and Surrealism.
198. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 11 are average. From average standards at the end of Year 9 this represents satisfactory achievement. As a result of staffing difficulties referred to earlier, some Year 11 students have not developed their key art skills of observational drawing and painting as well as might reasonably be expected, despite the best efforts of the present staff to remedy the situation. However, many students carry out good work in research and acquire a good knowledge and understanding of many 20th century artists. The highest attaining students show good productivity as when making some good prints from lino blocks. Painting and drawing skills are average. An example of the good achievement of talented students is an interesting copy of Patrick Herron's 'fourteen

discs' using coloured wools to give a different texture. Many students have completed good three-dimensional ceramic objects.

199. The quality of teaching in art and design is good. It is very good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and very good skills in art and design. These have a strong and very positive influence on students' learning in, for example, the demonstrations of a particular technique with which many lessons begin, or the quality of interactions with individual students. Lessons are planned very well and the art rooms are orderly places. Students' self-knowledge of their learning is satisfactory but the use of assessment as a strategy for driving up standards is less effective than in most other subjects. Students' behaviour is good throughout, providing a very positive basis for good productivity and learning. A very good Year 8 lesson, exemplifying these good features, began with a confident demonstration by the teacher of how to model a self-portrait in clay. This was observed with intense interest by the class and generated enthusiasm to begin their own models. Many of the points so ably demonstrated were well remembered, for instance the importance of getting the air out of the clay so that it would not explode on firing. There was very good productivity and progress. Many of the basic steps were completed by most of the students by the end of the lesson. In this lesson, students with special educational needs made similar very good progress, and this was so in many of the lessons observed. The quality of support for such students is unusually good. Students of minority ethnic background make similar progress to that of other students and are assimilated well in classes.
200. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained at similar levels representing satisfactory progress. Expectations and planning which were criticised in the previous report are now very good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the college.
- Very good leadership and management contribute to students' good achievement.
- Assessment effectively monitors progress and identifies areas for students to improve.
- Extra-curricular activities add good value to students' learning experiences.

Area for improvement

- The use of ICT is not always sufficient to enable students to enhance their work.

201. In 2001, attainment as measured by the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, was above the national average. Girls' attainment was higher than that of boys. The levels have been higher than the national average for the past three years because students are highly motivated, keen and interested in the subject. Several are gaining level 7. Given that students' attainment on entry is below the national average, the levels of attainment represent good progress across Years 7 to 9.
202. The proportion of students gaining GCSE A*-C grades in 2001 was just below the national average. This was an improvement on the previous year when results were below the national average. Girls did better than boys. In 2001, GCSE results at grades A*-C in graphics and textiles were above the national average. Results in resistant materials were slightly below average. Students attained slightly better

GCSE grades on average in design and technology than in their other subjects. The improvement in GCSE results is due to very focused teaching, early completion of coursework and a highly-structured programme of revision for the examinations. Results in design and technology in the past few years have improved well. Students' progress across Years 10 and 11 in design and technology is good.

203. Standards in lessons are average and indicate good achievement. In some groups of lower attainers, standards are below average. Design and technology is taught in Years 7 to 9 in a suitable rotation of courses. The well-balanced curriculum covers resistant materials, food technology, graphics and textiles. In Year 9, students enhance their work through the use of computer-aided work in design and making. Work in projects in resistant materials is extended through the inclusion of electronics. Students making a moneybox in a high attaining group in Year 7 confidently used basic drilling equipment to insert dowel rods. Although some found difficulty in making accurate measurements the finished products were of good quality. The designing and planning of a layered dessert by a mixed ability Year 7 group proved to be difficult for some. A very helpful support sheet and detailed specification enabled all the class to complete their ideas for design within the lesson. The development of good basic literacy skills was encouraged through sensory analysis of vegetarian products in a Year 8 class. Good attention to accuracy of measuring, cutting and shaping was a feature in a Year 8 project on mechanisms. Students used ICT well in the designing of packaging. In Year 9, all students learn the skills required to do computer-aided design. They have designed a house and installed furniture and fittings. Students successfully use the Internet to find information in order to calculate the loss of energy from their house. They have used good skills in word processing and desktop publishing to prepare promotional material to persuade clients to use a range of heat-saving devices. Students have acquired new skills, knowledge and understanding of a wide range of materials that have led to good achievement over three years.
204. Students in Year 10 acquire good graphical skills. A group of students taking the course in graphical communications develop very good skills in research. They have the ability to evaluate their research, draw up good specifications and develop a new cosmetic product. The highest attainers in the group produce good graphics by hand and by computer. Standards indicate that most are on course to gain GCSE A*-C grades. In textiles, students recognise that in developing their ideas for swimwear, educational toys or soft furnishings, they need a good understanding of properties of materials. They link their ideas to their original specifications. Most Year 11 students have a good basic understanding of nutrition and of healthy eating, and these are used to plan a children's party. Students are aware of health and safety issues. Most prepare well and take full responsibility for their personal organisation. In revision lessons, a few students had insufficient knowledge of industrial productivity but most had developed good skills of recall. Basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills receive suitable consideration in project work. Students of minority ethnic background and students for whom English is an additional language achieve well. For example, a student for whom English is an additional language made good progress in understanding the properties of plastics.
205. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Most are keen to answer questions, articulate their ideas and enjoy planning their ideas. A few lower attainers have difficulty in developing their ideas. Through good intervention from the teacher, these students eventually succeed. Most students support each other and act responsibly with equipment. Most take care with the presentation of their work. Some lower attainers have difficulty with graphical

presentation. A small number of boys display immature attitudes but, when checked by the teacher, they respond positively. Students in Years 10 and 11 generally accept responsibility for the development of their projects. They appreciate the help and support they receive from the teachers.

206. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject and effective schemes of work well to provide students with access to a wide range of skills, materials and learning experiences. They plan lessons well to encourage greater awareness of multi-cultural matters and the understanding and appreciation of good design. Very occasionally, the pace of lessons is too slow because extension work is not always provided, especially in some classes in Years 7 to 9. Most teachers enthuse about their subject and have a positive effect on students' motivation. Teachers' expectations are high. Their commitment to support after-college learning provides extra stimuli for students. It is having a very positive effect on students' learning through entering them for competitions and using extra-curricular visits to broaden students' experiences. Minor behavioural problems are handled effectively. The system for assessment monitors students' progress effectively. It identifies realistic areas for improvement. Homework is set regularly and frequently. In most cases, it helps to reinforce and extend classwork. Resources are used well. The technicians' support is invaluable in providing resources when and where required. Most teachers are well aware of their students' capabilities and keen to challenge and extend their quality of work. Teachers are committed to extending their own learning by attending courses of in-service training and sharing good practices.
207. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Inspired by the head of department, the team is committed fully to providing the best possible experiences for their students. The individual strengths of the staff are used very effectively to promote, for example, good graphical skills to all GCSE students. The department has a strong commitment to developing very good liaison with the primary schools through their involvement in teaching primary-aged pupils in the college. Departmental planning is thorough and reviewed regularly. Good assessment is properly recognised as being the key to raising standards. Resources, time and energy are used effectively to promote good quality of workmanship. The development of good industrial links and acquisition of sponsorship for specialist projects have contributed to providing students with a good and wide range of experiences. Appropriate priority is given to teaching and learning
208. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Several new developments have been successfully implemented, such as new schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 and a new system for assessment that monitors students' progress closely. Although ICT is integrated into schemes of work, some opportunities are missed to enhance students' learning even more.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to good learning.
- Very good marking helps students to improve their work.
- Good use of ICT enhances students' learning.
- Good management in recent months has improved teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students' GCSE results have been lower than those in their other subjects.
- Poor behaviour by a small minority of students sometimes hinders learning.

209. GCSE results at grades A*-C in 2001 were below average. There was, however, an increase in the proportion of students reaching these higher grades in 2001 from the previous year. Students' GCSE grades in geography were below their average grades in all other subjects. The proportion of students attaining A*-G grades was also below average. Girls' results were better than boys' in 2001. When teachers assessed work at the end of Year 9 in 2001, results were below average. Boys' assessed work was better than that of girls. As students enter the college with below average standards of attainment, their achievement at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11, in relation to this starting point, is satisfactory. Students' achievement has improved in recent months. This is due to the good teaching that students now receive from geography specialists and the good leadership and management that are now in place.
210. The standards of work of students in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection are below average. Students make steady, good progress so that their achievement is satisfactory relative to their attainment on entry to the college. The attainment of boys and girls is similar. Most students in Year 9 understand the difference between renewable and non-renewable resources. Lower attaining students, however, cannot correctly identify all sources of energy as renewable or non-renewable. The written work of higher attaining students is much more accurate and explains why nuclear power could be described as a renewable and a non-renewable resource. This good understanding of the complexities of this issue is due to good teaching. Most students have literary skills that are below average. Spelling is poor. Low attaining students have difficulty in writing extended pieces of work. Higher attaining students' written work is much more developed and accurate. Their description of the equipment needed to travel in the Amazon and their explanations of why it is necessary in relation to the climate and other factors, were particularly good. Students use ICT well. In Year 8, students use ICT to produce well-designed reports on the impact of tourism in Kenya. They show good appreciation of the needs of the reader by including pictures from the Internet and by an appropriate use of types of font and colour. This is due to the good teaching of ICT skills. Students with special educational needs make good progress as their teachers are aware of their needs and use appropriate methods to meet them. This particularly applies to visually impaired students, who make good progress because of the effective assistance they receive from their geography teachers and support staff. These students are fully included in all activities.
211. The attainment of students in Years 10 and 11 observed during the inspection is below average. However, they make steady progress so that their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. A few students, mainly boys, exhibit immature behaviour that limits their learning and that of others in the class. Most students in Year 10 understand how important water is to people. Higher attaining students can successfully link the availability of water in Plymouth to the rate of consumption and draw good conclusions from this. Lower attaining students do not fully understand how to interpret pie charts of how water is used and are unsure how to construct these. However, lower attaining students in Year 11 can successfully complete a statistical diagram to show the similarities and differences between farming in countries at differing stages of development because of the careful explanation by their teachers. Higher attaining students understand the impact of Green Revolution farming methods on developing countries. Students' fieldwork shows good use of geographical techniques. Lower attaining students, for example,

use accurate flow diagrams to show movement of traffic and pedestrians because methods of collecting data and presentational skills have been taught well. Students are encouraged to use ICT where appropriate. Some students use ICT well to present their files of GCSE coursework. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

212. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers prepare well so that lessons start and proceed smoothly. They plan lessons effectively to meet the needs of all students. Teaching methods are varied and often innovative. They engage the interest of the students and, as a result, help students to learn at a good pace. Good teaching materials stimulate discussions. The provision of differentiated materials for those with special educational needs and, in some lessons, extension work for those identified as being gifted and talented, enhances the learning of these students. The active support given by the teachers and support staff to individuals in lessons further assists the learning of all students. Teachers explain the lesson's objectives clearly so that students know exactly what they are to learn. In the best lessons, teachers return to these at the end of the lesson and, by skilled questioning, reinforce the main learning points. Teachers use this information well to modify their subsequent lessons. The quality of teachers' marking is very good. It is detailed, with points for students to improve upon, and is a major reason for the good learning that takes place. Provision of homework is good. It is set as an integral part of the lesson. It is often challenging and enhances understanding. Teachers know their subject well. As a result, their explanations are clear and they give good examples that provide colour to the discussion. Accordingly, the interest of the students is maintained.
213. Students' attitudes towards geography are satisfactory. Teachers expect students to work hard. They maintain a good working atmosphere in most classes with friendly but firm discipline. However, the behaviour of a minority of boys, especially in Year 11, is not controlled well, and learning suffers. Students work well together. Discussion is usually orderly and individuals' views are respected.
214. The new leadership and management of the department are good. They have led to better standards in classes currently than the standards indicated in external examination results in recent years. All teachers in the department now have a clear and shared sense of direction that places a good emphasis on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Information from assessment is used very effectively to set targets, to monitor progress and to give students ideas on how to improve. Provision of fieldwork is very good. It helps students to consolidate their skills of developing a hypothesis then testing it by collecting and analysing data. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The department has the capacity and commitment to raise standards further. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, mainly as a result of recent developments and better provision under the new leadership of the department.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Very good assessment and monitoring of students' work contribute to good progress.
- Effective leadership and management have a clear focus on raising standards.

- Students' positive attitudes and good relationships with teachers create a good learning climate.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of structured writing is inconsistent from Year 7 onwards.
- Students, especially higher attainers, have too few opportunities to learn independently.

215. In 2001, attainment at the end of Year 9 as measured by teachers' National Curriculum assessments was well below average. Girls' attainment was higher than that of boys. Over the last three years there has been no clear pattern of change. Variations in attainment are largely the result of different capability and prior attainment of each year's group of students. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students who gained GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 and in recent years was well below the national average. The proportion gaining grades A*-G has improved over the last three years and matches the national average. Girls' attainment has, usually, been higher than that of boys.
216. The standards of work seen during the inspection are higher than that indicated by recent results. By the end of Year 9, the attainment of current students is below average, but not well below. Students' written work is weaker than the level of their knowledge and understanding shown in class discussions. Students of above average attainment can select relevant historical information from sources and deploy it in written work that is structured well to explain the causes and results of historical events. They use historical terminology appropriately and make some evaluation of historical sources. Students of average attainment describe, but do not always explain, historical events. They identify some of the main causes and consequences but their evaluation of sources is weak. Lower attaining students make use of sources to extract information and describe events briefly but cannot evaluate these sources. Attainment in the current Year 7 is relatively higher than that in Years 8 and 9. By Year 11, standards of written work are below average. Students' knowledge and understanding are better than their written work suggests. Higher attaining students can explain causation and consequence. They produce structured writing, largely in analytical form, and evaluate historical sources to identify some of the limitations. These students are performing at a level comparable to national standards for similar students. Most students, however, are below average in their attainment. They deploy information relevantly and explain events, though their written work often reverts to the descriptive. They use many historical terms correctly and make some evaluation of sources. Students of lower attainment describe historical events and make use of sources to extract relevant information and identify key points. Many students, particularly those of below average attainment, have weaknesses in literacy, which hamper their work in history. Boys sometimes take less care with the organisation and presentation of their work than girls.
217. Achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Students, including those with special educational needs, visual impairment and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Progress in written work is satisfactory. Students make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and historical skills.
218. The quality of teaching in history is good. It is often very good. Teachers plan their lessons well and make good use of time. They present the subject well in language which students understand. They use methods and resources that allow students of all capabilities to learn. Teachers produce good materials appropriate to the needs of different levels of attainment. They manage their classes very well so that behaviour

is good. Students show interest in their work and concentrate well. They are frequently challenged to think for themselves, as in a Year 11 lesson on the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, in which students had to extract key points from a series of sources. Teachers make good use of group work as seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson in which students considered why people voted for Hitler. Skills in sourcework are taught systematically throughout the years. Teachers help students to acquire historical vocabulary and the skills needed for structured writing, although this is more consistently done in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower years. Frequent and regular homework assists students' learning in history. Teachers make very effective use of assessment to help students to improve. Teachers mark and assess work thoroughly. Students receive good feedback so that they understand their level of attainment and what they need to do in order to improve. Assessment is also used effectively to influence the programme of teaching. For example, one teacher identified a weakness in Year 10 students' use of their own knowledge to support answers to GCSE questions about sourcework. A carefully-planned lesson to address this weakness resulted in good progress for these students.

219. Students have positive attitudes to history. Relationships are good and students work well together. These factors have a positive influence on standards, as do good leadership and management of the department: A shared commitment among specialist and non-specialist members of the department to raise standards is succeeding. The department has appropriate priorities for improvement. History makes an important contribution to the social and moral development of students through consideration of issues such as slavery in Year 8 and votes for women in Year 10, as well as the many opportunities for collaborative work. There are, however, limited opportunities for the study of non-European cultures. Poor attendance by some students depresses their attainment.
220. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Although most students remain below average in attainment, teachers' expectations are now higher and students make good progress. Most importantly, the quality of teaching is now consistently good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and students' positive attitudes towards learning enable them to make good progress and achieve well.
- Access to resources of good quality helps students' confidence and competence as users of ICT.
- Good self-assessment procedures help students to become more independent in their learning.

Area for improvement

- Students have limited opportunities to develop their ICT skills in a few subjects.

221. Standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 are average. Teachers' assessments indicate that the majority of students reach the nationally expected levels by this stage, although very few attained higher levels in 2001.

222. Students enter the college with below average levels of attainment. They make good progress so that by the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 their attainment represents good achievement. There is a considerable difference in the achievement of girls and boys, both at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Girls outperform boys at both stages. Gifted and talented students, those for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs, including visually impaired students, make good progress.
223. Because of good teaching and access to modern equipment, attainment at the end of Year 9 is average. Students are particularly skilled at communicating their ideas using a range of software. They are able to insert a range of graphical images, re-size them and manipulate fonts with considerable expertise. Students in Year 8 use complex structures when designing pages for the Internet. Those in Year 9 use computer-aided design software and other packages to draw up plans for rooms that incorporate energy-saving devices. In doing so, they establish an imaginary company and consider ways of advertising their products, using word-processing and desktop publishing software. This is good work.
224. By the end of Year 11, attainment is average. In their GNVQ courses, students continue to develop their good presentational skills. They use a wide range of appropriate applications such as databases and spreadsheets with confidence to collate and analyse a variety of data. Higher attaining students incorporate video clips and sound within the web pages that they design and refine. The achievement of a few average and lower attaining students is restricted by underdeveloped literacy skills and by failing to proofread and evaluate their work sufficiently.
225. Students use the Internet well for research and retrieval of information. They exhibit considerable initiative when searching for relevant web sites to enhance their own work. They download text, images and graphics with considerable skill. Most have a good attitude towards ICT. This is a major reason for the good progress that is made. Students are interested and concentrate on their work throughout most lessons. Behaviour is good. They help each other willingly. This collaboration in the sharing of knowledge contributes appreciably to the good learning that takes place.
226. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and the software. They plan their lessons very well. They give clear examples to provide context and relevance that assist learning. They alert students to possible pitfalls that could confuse issues. Teachers show high expectations of their students through the challenging tasks that allow students to achieve in excess of expectations based upon prior attainment. Teachers use praise and commendation effectively to encourage students to persevere so that they make the best use of the time available to them in lessons. Most lessons have a clear structure. Students are told what is to be learned, and these points are reinforced through careful questioning at the end of most lessons. A major aid to learning is the very good system used for assessment. Students not only receive good feedback from teachers on how well they are doing, they review their own progress and set meaningful targets for future success.
227. Students are confident and competent when operating the computers as a result of the good learning that takes place over time. They are not afraid to experiment and to search out answers for themselves. In lessons, teachers support well the learning of students with special educational needs. Most noteworthy is the way in which students with visual impairment cope admirably, aided by large screen monitors, larger fonts or specially prepared worksheets. These students make good progress

and achieve well. Most worksheets and on-line documentation are tailored well to cope with the literacy skills of all students. However, on a few occasions, they are too difficult and do not help students to understand fully what they are required to do.

228. A few students under-achieve because they are absent from college intermittently or for extended periods of time. As a result, they are unsure of their work and make limited progress.
229. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in other subjects, whilst improving students' ICT skills, has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. In some subjects its use is good. The college suitably requires departments to include the use of ICT within their schemes of work. Provision is especially good in business studies, in which ICT is integral to the course, history and geography. In most other subjects, its use is at least satisfactory. In science, the limited availability of data-loggers restricts the range of ICT experiences. A few subjects find access to the computing rooms difficult. As a result, they are unable to develop students' ICT skills fully in their subject. A good example of use in business studies occurred in a Year 10 lesson in which students presented their findings about customers' satisfaction with a large supermarket. Many of them used a commercial ICT presentational package to good effect and exhibited considerable understanding of its power. In geography, for example, students word process their presentations of fieldwork, use spreadsheets for data and graphical work, import appropriate clipart and similar items, and access the Internet for purposes of research.
230. The management of ICT is good. The college has invested well in this area so that the ratio of students to computers is good and improving. This provision is a major reason for the good levels of achievement. It represents a substantial improvement since the previous inspection. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good. It plays a key part in determining the professional development of staff. It thus helps support the good learning that takes place. Curricular provision is constantly under review so that students receive the best opportunities to succeed. The separately-taught ICT courses are planned very well and provide a good sequence to students' learning.
231. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There is more time allocated for the subject to be taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9, although only in Year 7 is the provision completely under the auspices of the ICT department. Procedures for assessment are related to the levels of attainment of the National Curriculum. Students are well aware of their current attainment. This helps them to work with confidence towards their targets for improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- An above average proportion of students attain grades A*-G in GCSE examination in French.
- Achievement is often good in Spanish and German.
- Good extra-curricular provision increases students' competence in the three languages.
- A good choice from three languages improves students' motivation.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment remains below national averages at end of Year 9 and Year 11, particularly in French.
- Students lack the confidence to speak with fluency or length, particularly in French.
- Most students in Years 7 to 9 do not write well.
- Students make insufficient use of ICT to improve their linguistic skills.
- Students have insufficient time to make good progress in their second language.

French

232. Currently there are no students studying French in Year 9. By the end of Year 8 standards of attainment are below average. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average. Students' grades in French were lower than in their other subjects. The margin of difference was greater than the national difference. Girls attained better results than boys, as is the case nationally. The college is aware that the decline in results since 1999 has been caused by a lack of continuity in teaching. It has taken appropriate steps to remedy the situation. It is in negotiation with the examination board over the marking of aspects of the examination in 2001. The proportion of students who are entered for a full GCSE examination in French and achieve a grade is consistently higher than the national proportion. Standards of attainment in the current Year 11 indicate an improvement over the previous two years, but remain below the national average.
233. Achievement in French by the end of Year 8 is satisfactory. Students of all capabilities understand easily enough what their teachers say to them. They comprehend simple French recorded on tape on topics familiar to them. All students, including those with special educational needs, have a satisfactory understanding of written words, phrases and short sentences from work sheets or course books. However, they are reluctant to give even brief answers to direct questions in French because they do not hear the language used sufficiently in the classroom for routine business and so lack the experience of responding spontaneously to it. They maintain a simple dialogue with each other but rely too heavily on reading their role-plays from prompts. As a result, their speech is hesitant and anglicised. Students' ability to write in French varies. Where they have been encouraged to write at length, students of all levels of attainment produce some good paragraphs about themselves and where they live. However, far too much writing is restricted to single, very simple, sentences. Students in the current Years 10 and 11 develop their reading and listening skills satisfactorily. Higher attaining students write more extensively, but, with the exception of the highest attainers, most students still find writing at any length and with any great accuracy, very difficult. They have an inadequate grasp of basic structure and weak dictionary skills. They still lack the confidence to speak fluently. Their pronunciation and intonation are weak. However, some higher and average attainers, particularly boys, are prepared to take risks and attempt to communicate.

German

234. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 for students of German as their second language are broadly average. GCSE results at grades A*-C in German in 2001 were well below the national average. Results at grades A*-G were above the national average. As in French, students' GCSE grades were lower than their grades in other subjects by a greater margin than the national tendency. Standards in the current Years 10 and 11 indicate an improvement in attainment, but standards overall remain below the national average.

235. Achievement in German is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, students contribute willingly to oral work in class, although, for the most part, only the highest attainers, particularly boys, attempt to expand their answers to the teacher's questions. Their pronunciation is satisfactory. They listen effectively to their teachers and to simple recorded material. They recognise the written word. However, they do not write at any length. Students improve rapidly in Year 10. Higher attaining students produce some good, extended writing, making good use of computers to improve the presentation and illustration of their work. Average attaining students do write at greater length, but their use of basic structures is often inaccurate. Students have access to material from the Internet which gives good variety and authenticity to the texts they read. Although reticent to speak, some of the higher attaining students are trying to use memory in their role-play dialogues rather than rely on written prompts.

Spanish

236. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment in Spanish are below average. Currently, the first language for all students in Year 9 is Spanish. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 for the small group of higher attaining students taking the subject were well above the national average, as they have been for similar groups in previous years. Attainment for the group of higher attainers in the current Year 11 is above average.
237. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. In Year 7, students speak well. Higher attaining students can sustain simple, structured dialogues from memory in role-play and are beginning to add in their own material well. One group, working on ordering a snack in a café, included a variety of greetings and pleasantries that added to the humour and enjoyment of the exercise well. A class of special educational needs students, given excellent support and encouragement from their teacher, asked each other questions about places in Spanish towns and responded very confidently in accurate, full sentences. The current Year 9 students have not retained this spontaneity and confidence, but respond without hesitation to the teacher's direct questions. Their pronunciation is satisfactory. Some higher attaining students in Year 9 write well, showing a good understanding of basic structure. However, the majority of students have a limited experience of extended writing from Years 7 to 9 and limited access to computers to improve their writing skills. Students in Year 11 have good reading, listening and speaking skills. Their pronunciation of Spanish is satisfactory. They have a good range of vocabulary and idiom. The quality of their written work varies. The high attainers cope with complex structure accurately. More frequently, students' style is very simple and their work often careless.

French, German and Spanish

238. Relative to their previous attainment, students make satisfactory progress. The broad division of students according to their attainment ensures that, in general, their differing needs are addressed. A discrete group of students with special educational needs in Year 7 made excellent progress in reading, writing and, especially, speaking Spanish because the teacher had sequenced tasks skilfully to suit their individual needs. In all years, students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are satisfactorily integrated into activities in lessons. When individual support is available, students with special needs keep on task well. A small number of students with vision impairment, in a Year 8 French class and in a Year 9 German class, were able to take full part in the lesson because they had larger print materials and discreet, extra individual support. There is variation in the rate of progress, related to the quality and continuity of teaching. Where teachers know how

to manage the behaviour of their students and have established a good rapport with them over time, students make good progress. In these circumstances, students show respect for each other and work well in pairs, groups and individually. They appreciate what they must do to succeed and apply themselves willingly. However, where teaching is, or in the past has been, less effective, behaviour is unsatisfactory and students, especially some older, lower attaining boys, have difficulty keeping on task and are disruptive.

239. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall. In Years 7 to 9 all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. One in every three lessons was good or better. In Years 10 and 11, a small proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory but over half was good. Strengths in teaching include the high level of personal skill of staff, and lessons that have clear objectives. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and provide students with the support they need to perform tasks successfully. In a Year 11 French lesson, the class teacher explained clearly and succinctly what was required of students to achieve good marks in their forthcoming oral exams. He had prepared a booklet of role-plays that was of good quality. He worked his way rapidly through a series of graded examples, showing students how to use the information they were given to best effect, how to use cognates to help them and how to adapt one set of circumstances to a variety of related situations. Teachers concentrate on teaching linguistic skills and structures. They reinforce basic literacy skills in English. They set homework that consolidates students' knowledge. Where teaching has weaknesses, it is characterised by poorer behavioural management and subsequent lack of pace. In these lessons, teachers do not explain tasks well enough to enable students to succeed and do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to consolidate their knowledge. Marking, generally, is too lenient. Teachers do not insist upon accuracy and completion of corrections, so students' writing skills do not develop sufficiently. Some teachers use English too frequently for routine work in class, so students are not accustomed to hearing the foreign language and responding spontaneously in it. Teachers make use of word processing to stimulate interest. However, the use of ICT to reinforce linguistic skills, such as the use of e-mail to stimulate writing or word processing for rigorous, critical appreciation of personal writing, is underdeveloped.
240. The head of department has a good idea of where the department is and the direction in which it should be moving. As a competent and enthusiastic linguist, he leads by example. The good programme of staff development supports the exchange of good practice. Assessment is beginning to be used to inform curricular planning. The senior management team monitors the department effectively. A series of after-college and support sessions in holidays, and regular residential visits to France, Spain and Germany, improve students' competence and confidence well and raise the profile of language learning in the college effectively. High turnover of staff and difficulties of recruitment over the past three years have had a detrimental effect on the continuity of teaching and the quality of students' learning. The college has now addressed these issues satisfactorily.
241. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Timetabling anomalies have been reduced. However, the time allocation for the study of two languages remains inadequate for students to make as much progress as they could. Some classes of younger students remain too large for the available accommodation. As a result, students are not able to undertake the full range of language learning tasks effectively. The profile of languages in the college's curriculum has been raised by the greater access and wider choice that students have to the three languages on offer.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The organisation of the curriculum in music has improved well since the previous inspection.
- Provision has greatly improved under good leadership of the new head of department and standards are now rising.
- The department has the capacity to improve greatly.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are well below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. It ranges from very good to poor.
- Skills in performing, composing and listening are inadequate; achievement is unsatisfactory.
- In work in the classroom, students sing insufficiently and irregularly.
- Learning does not sufficiently develop practical skills; students make insufficient use of their own instruments in classroom work.
- Lack of soundproofing of doors between rooms adversely affects learning.
- Resources are unsatisfactory; there are many shortages, including computers.

242. Overall, the quality of provision is unsatisfactory in classroom work but good in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work.
243. Students' attainment in music when they enter the college is below average. Very few enter with above average standards. Standards in Year 7 are below average but, by Year 9, standards are well below average. Teachers' assessments confirm this. Students' progress varies in lessons from very good to poor. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. Contributory factors are the low allocation of time given to music and a lack of adequate resourcing. Most students are working at about level 3 or 4, but some talented students attain higher levels up to level 6. Students sing satisfactorily but sing irregularly and insufficiently to develop their skills and an appropriate repertoire. Instrumental skills are underdeveloped. Students play mainly keyboards and have insufficient opportunity to use their own instruments. They use letters under notes when they try to play very simple tunes. Students lack composing skills; their understanding of musical devices is inadequate. Little use is made of ICT in composing. The music-reading skills of most students are poor. Students with instrumental experience have a good grasp of notation. Most students are not good listeners. Their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures, artists and well known pieces of music, is poor.
244. In recent years, the numbers taking music at GCSE level have been low. Results have been below average. In Year 11, ten students currently take music. Standards are well below average, with performing skills averaging about grade 2. A very small number of talented musicians play drums and guitar, as well as piano at grade 6. Composing skills are insufficiently developed, but talented students show a good understanding of harmony. The lack of musical technologies, including computers, results in students' general musical knowledge being well below average. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory. In Year 10, four students receive lessons after college, and standards are broadly average. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Year 10, within the very limited time available.

245. Teaching in classroom work in Years 7 to 9 varies from very good to poor. Although the majority of lessons are good this variability makes teaching unsatisfactory overall. In instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work, teaching is mainly satisfactory and is sometimes good or better. In classwork, teachers show a good knowledge of the subject and teach confidently. They make good use of their skills as musicians, for example, when accompanying or demonstrating. In the better lessons, instructions and directions are clear; teaching is energetic and students understand the objectives. Good attention to developing musical vocabulary and a very good example of music supporting numeracy were seen when students experimented with pipes, relating their lengths to fractions and the pentatonic scale, in a study of Chinese music. Schemes and content of lessons are thoughtfully put together, but a major weakness is that, in the weaker lessons, there is too much study of music and not enough making of it. This affects adversely the progress and attitudes of students. Expectations are high in the good lessons. In a few other lessons, expectations are too low so that students, especially boys, become bored and have negative attitudes because the work lacks challenge. Students with special educational needs are integrated well and make good progress through the support of learning support assistants. In the best lessons, extension work is provided for most musical activities, often enabling students to develop performances separately, so that they are suitably stretched. The good lessons have clear structures and are organised well so that time and resources are used effectively. The management of students is often very good but is weak in the less than satisfactory lessons, resulting in students being less productive. As a result, relationships vary from very good when teaching is good to unsatisfactory when teaching is less than satisfactory. Lessons start briskly and maintain a good pace in the more successful sessions so that students remain focused because of the enthusiastic style of teaching. In lessons in which the tasks do not engage the students sufficiently, their interest wanes quickly. Students are usually good humoured and work well, especially in practical work, but they dislike written work and the didactic approach that is sometimes adopted. As a result, behaviour varies from very good to poor, and it has a similar effect upon progress made in class. Although some students are keen, work well and give good support to each other, for example, when working in pairs on keyboards, a sizeable minority of students cannot always be relied upon to work independently, for example, to rehearse in groups or to use equipment sensibly. This is often because they lack the skills and confidence to tackle the task. The lack of computers in the department means that students do not extend or enhance their musical activities sufficiently. In the best lessons, the assessment of students is supportive. Teachers check students' understanding frequently and show them how they can improve. In the good lessons, effective use is made of homework to extend students' learning. It was not possible to inspect any lessons in Years 10 or 11 but scrutiny of work and discussions with students indicate that teaching and learning are now at least satisfactory.
246. The good leadership and management of the recently appointed head of department have led to an improvement in standards, though much remains to be done. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory during an unsettled period with many staff changes. The new head of department has clear ideas about how to move the department forward but has not had enough time to raise standards sufficiently, but improvements are well under way and the department has the capacity to improve. Documentation is thorough and day-to-day organisation is good, reflecting the commitment and hard work of the team. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance are appropriate. Assessment is thought out well and used to review planning. There are useful links with other colleges in the local confederation. Keyboard resources are good; they support students' learning well but

there is lack of and an urgent need for computers, recording equipment, video, compact discs, music for singing, playing and the library. Accommodation is good except for the lack of soundproofing of doors, resulting in the noise from lessons severely disrupting lessons in adjacent rooms. This affects the progress of students in classroom work and in instrumental tuition.

247. Thirty-one boys and 39 girls receive lessons in instruments or voice from six visiting teachers. This is about one in 20 of the college's population and is a below average proportion. Standards are below average overall but improving. Standards are average in playing wind instruments. The teaching of the peripatetic teachers is satisfactory. Some good teaching was observed in lessons on the violin. Almost all of the boys who take lessons play drums or guitar. The progress and achievement of students are good in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. Students make insufficient use of their own instruments so that the curriculum insufficiently supports instrumental tuition, and tuition makes little impact on the quality of students' musical experiences in the classroom. The department is working towards using these fully. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is limited; it includes a girls-only singing group, a very small orchestra, Samba Band, Latin Guitar group and various rock bands. These developing activities involve relatively few students but they show enthusiastic attitudes. Standards and the quality of teaching are good and the singing group performs very well, for example, when singing songs such as *Natural* or *Tell Him*. The college promotes regular concerts. Musical groups perform regularly in assemblies and local events, for example at the Plymouth Arts Festival. The department organises workshops such as vocal workshops held recently. Music makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. The provision for cultural education in music is good. These activities reflect the commitment of staff, the good support of parents and the enthusiasm of the students involved. Students' performances bring credit to the college and to this improving department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are well above national averages and indicate very good achievement.
- Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 helps students to make good progress.
- Assessment is used well to help students in Years 7 to 9 to improve standards.
- Very good links with the learning support department ensure that students with special educational needs make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate participation by some students in Years 10 and 11, mainly girls, affects standards adversely.
- Non-specialist teachers do not always have sufficient support.
- Students not participating in practical work are not involved sufficiently in the lesson.

248. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement because students enter the college with below average standards and with limited experience in some activities such as gymnastics. By the end of Year 11, attainment in the general physical education course taken by all students is average and indicates satisfactory achievement. Standards are below average when there is frequent absence or non-participation by students, or teaching by non-specialists. Standards are very good for students taking the GCSE course. In 2001, GCSE results were well above the national average for higher grades A*-C. All students taking the examination gained a pass. Students of all capabilities achieved equally well. The proportion of students taking the course is similar to national figures, with the lower proportion of girls taking the examination following the national trend. Students did better in physical education than in the other subjects they entered. In 2001, GCSE results were the highest in the college. In physical education, good provision is made for talented students. They receive good support and encouragement to join specialist adult clubs and have plenty of opportunities to play games at local and regional level.

249. In work seen at the end of Year 9, students demonstrate increasing control and accuracy in a range of activities. They have a satisfactory understanding of how to prepare for activity and of the effect of exercise on the body. They take increasing responsibility for their own preparation at the start of lessons. In cricket, they bowl with a good line and length. In tennis, they play continuous rallies. They know and apply the rules of these games as they play. Students observe carefully so they know what to do when learning a skill. They express their views and comment accurately when asked to evaluate a performance. However, these opportunities to observe and comment on their own and others' work are not offered consistently in lessons. Standards are similar between boys and girls and among students from different ethnic groups. Students with special educational needs are known well to staff. In lessons, skills are taught carefully to them and their behaviour is managed well. Accordingly, students with special educational needs make good progress. Achievement and standards in Years 7 to 9 are enhanced by the very good links with partner, primary schools.

250. In Years 10 and 11, standards in the lessons for general physical education were average. Standards are slightly better for boys than girls because of higher levels of participation by boys. Students apply their skills well in games. They are beginning to use tactics to help to defeat an opponent. For example, in badminton they know how to use the advantages to be gained when serving. Their skills of observing and judging a performance have not developed sufficiently from earlier years because they do not receive enough encouragement in lessons to do this. Students with special needs make good progress. Those taking the GCSE course achieve very well in both practical and theoretical work. This is because lessons are structured carefully to ensure good coverage of key points in the syllabus of work. Students have good knowledge and understanding of the required areas of study, for example, the influence of body type on activity. In practical work they demonstrate a good level of skill in a number of games. Folders of work are presented well. Students have sound writing skills. Satisfactory and improving use is made of ICT to extend learning. Homework is set and marked regularly. It helps students to improve their understanding of the work.

251. Students have good attitudes and their behaviour is good. They work hard in lessons to develop their knowledge and skills. In Years 7 to 9, they are particularly enthusiastic and respond well to the high expectations of their teachers. They co-operate well when learning new skills and playing in teams. A few students do not have such good attitudes, particularly in Years 10 and 11. While behaviour is satisfactory for these students their levels of non-participation are too high, particularly for girls. A very good system of monitoring in Years 7 to 9 is improving both participation and attendance but has yet to be extended to students in Years 10 and 11.
252. The quality of teaching is good. It is very good in Years 7 to 9 and with examination classes in Years 10 and 11. In the general physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory rather than good because non-specialist staff teach some of the lessons and do not have the appropriate levels of expertise to ensure that all topics can be studied in suitable detail. Specialist teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use this to plan activities that develop skills through a careful step-by-step process and with clear explanations. As a result, students of all capabilities have a clear picture of what to do. In lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers make very good use of assessment so students know what they should do to improve. For example, in a Year 8 tennis lesson, the teacher helped students to understand how they needed to add a backhand stroke to their rallies in order to achieve the level of performance expected of them. Their attention was drawn to the very good wall displays explaining how their work is assessed. The management of students' behaviour and the organisation of equipment and groupings of students are very good. Lessons run at a good pace. In a very good Year 11 indoor hockey lesson, students quickly covered the basic points of this activity, new for many, and moved to playing games using their good team skills learnt in other activities such as netball and football. Students not taking part are not fully involved in the work of lesson. In some cases they go elsewhere and work on coursework not related to physical education. A very small proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory because of limited knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study for physical education.
253. Management and leadership are good. The hard-working and committed teachers use their strengths and interests well to support students' learning. The priorities for the subject are thought out carefully in order to raise standards. Recent developments have covered assessment and the regular and effective links with the special educational needs department to monitor the progress of students with particular needs. The needs of visually-impaired students receive particular attention so they can take an active part in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, there are insufficient specialist staff for the number of students involved. This has an adverse effect on standards in some of these classes because insufficient guidance is given to these non-specialist teachers. The range of activities that can be offered in Years 10 and 11 is limited by the use of non-specialist teachers. The college works to reduce these problems with the use of outside, specialist coaches in some classes. Financial resources are used well. The good range of equipment in lessons promotes good learning. Accommodation is adequate but the lack of any large fixed apparatus in the gymnasium limits the range of activities that can be undertaken with students. Outdoor facilities are unsatisfactory because there is insufficient area of field to provide both for hockey and football and the hard area for playing games area is small.

254. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching has improved especially in Years 7 to 9. GCSE results have improved to well above average. A good system of assessment has been introduced.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strength

- Students' attitudes to the subject have improved since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment is well below expected levels and students are under-achieving.
- The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory because of poor planning.
- Students do not receive their entitlement in the subject in Years 10 and 11.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management of the subject contribute to under-achievement.

255. In recent years there has been no GCSE work in religious education. Although some religious topics are covered in the course in personal and social education, no planned provision is made for religious education in Years 10 and 11. There was, therefore, not enough evidence to make judgements about standards in the subject at the end of Year 11.
256. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are well below the level expected by the local agreed syllabus. Students' knowledge and understanding of different religious traditions are still at a basic level. They have difficulty in relating what they are learning about religion to their own experience. Most Year 9 students, for example, showed little understanding of religious beliefs and practices when devising a board game about journeys through life. Students' written work is often brief and incomplete, although extended writing by some higher attaining students on creation stories in Year 7, and on ideas of heaven and hell in Year 9, were imaginative and written well. At the moment, students, including those with special educational needs, are under-achieving in religious education. They should be making faster progress in lessons and reaching higher standards.
257. The overall quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. During the week of the inspection some of the teaching seen was undertaken by staff covering for the absence of the teacher in charge of the subject. The planning of lessons is poor. This limits the development of students' knowledge and understanding of religion, as in a sequence of lessons on signs and symbols in Year 7. The learning objectives for individual lessons are not identified clearly enough so that students are uncertain about the purpose of the work. Tasks are insufficiently structured, which means that students often make limited progress, for example in a Year 9 lesson on rites of passage. When work is demanding and planned carefully, as in a lesson using ICT in Year 8, students' learning improves. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve in religious education are too low. This leads to undemanding tasks and limited progress in lessons. In a Year 7 lesson on symbols in world religions, students made very slow progress because the work lacked challenge and interest. Teachers manage students effectively in most lessons so that the conditions for effective learning are in place. Students' attitudes to religious education in lessons are generally satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection.

258. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory currently. The teacher in charge has only been in post for the last six months. He has had long periods of absence, for much of that time, that have held up developments in the subject. The existing scheme of work lacks sufficient detail and direction for planning lessons, which is a major factor in explaining unsatisfactory teaching and under-achievement in the subject. A start has been made to develop procedures for assessment but, at the moment, students are not clear as to how they can improve their work. Provision for the subject meets statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9 but not in Years 10 and 11. The college has worked hard to address the issues raised at the previous inspection, but progress has been slow and the overall improvement has been unsatisfactory. However, the development plan for the subject accurately identifies what needs to be done to raise attainment and achievement in the subject.

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

259. In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

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

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	100	88	13	44	2.75	N/a
Biology	9	78	84	22	36	2.00	N/a
Chemistry	5	100	87	40	42	3.00	N/a
Drama	18	94	N/a	17	N/a	2.50	N/a
Design and technology	10	60	N/a	0	N/a	0.90	N/a
English	20	100	95	35	37	2.75	N/a
General studies	12	83	N/a	33	N/a	2.17	N/a
History	12	100	94	33	43	2.83	N/a
Law	3	100	79	0	29	2.00	N/a
Mathematics	14	29	62	0	15	0.40	1.51
Media studies	10	100	N/a	20	N/a	2.30	N/a
Physics	4	100	86	50	41	3.25	N/a
Psychology	10	100	82	30	26	2.60	N/a
Sociology	2	50	63	0	7	1.5	1.17
Spanish	4	100	N/a	100	N/a	4.25	N/a
Sports studies	3	100	N/a	67	N/a	3.33	N/a

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	100	96	43	46	7.14	6.57
Biology	5	100	88	40	34	6.40	5.25
Chemistry	7	100	90	43	43	6.86	5.90
Communication studies	8	75	93	38	31	5.00	5.53
Drama	16	100	99	25	38	5.63	6.59
English literature	12	83	95	0	37	3.50	5.91

French	3	33	89	0	38	0.67	5.59
Design and technology	13	100	91	8	30	4.31	5.38
Geography	7	86	92	0	38	2.57	5.74
German	3	100	91	0	40	2.00	5.81
History	8	100	88	25	35	5.75	5.45
Mathematics	15	93	87	20	43	4.93	5.80
Other social studies	4	100	87	25	34	6.50	5.30
Physics	5	100	88	20	40	3.60	5.67
Sociology	5	100	63	0	7	6.80	5.32
Sports/PE studies	6	100	92	17	25	5.00	5.09
Business	6	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	8.00	10.45
Health and social care	8	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	9.00	10.79
Information technology	5	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	7.20	9.97

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and social care	1	100	N/a	100	N/a	N/a	N/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

261. In mathematics, the focus was on the A-level and AS-level courses in Years 12 and 13. The key skills course on application of number was sampled. In the one lesson seen, teaching and learning were good; students had positive attitudes to the work and made good progress.
262. In science, the focus was on the complete range of A-level and AS-level courses in chemistry, biology and physics.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve well.
- Good relationships between teachers and students create a purposeful and supportive environment for learning.

Area for improvement

- Students have limited opportunities to take the initiative for their own learning.

263. Mathematics is a popular subject for students to study at A or AS-level. The numbers in Year 12, which are in excess of those in most other subjects, allow for students to be taught in two sets based upon their attainment at GCSE. Over recent years the number of students staying on to pursue studies through to the end of Year 13, as a proportion of those entering the course in Year 12, has been high. This year, however, only five students are studying the subject in Year 13.
264. Results in A-level examinations in recent years have been around the national average. In most instances, students' results have represented good achievement over time. In 2001, however, the results whilst matching the national average did not represent such good achievement. Results in AS-level examinations were below average in 2001 and, for many students, were below expectations based on prior attainment. The unfamiliarity of teaching the new course was a contributory factor to the disappointing results.
265. Students in Years 12 and 13, including those for whom English is an additional language, are making good progress and achieving well. Standards of work are average. This is because of the predominantly good teaching that challenges students appropriately. In Year 13, for example, students cope well with a range of trigonometrical identities, often using their knowledge of graphical transformations advantageously. They manipulate algebraic expressions with confidence. In Year 12, students have learned well to visualise situations that occur in problems involving Newton's Laws of Motion. Consequently, they model the circumstances appropriately and obtain correct solutions. This is because they have been taught very well to think about what they are doing rather than just repeating a set of mechanistic processes. In both years, though, many students rely too heavily upon their teachers for information and guidance. They tend not to take the initiative to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject through personal research.

266. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of success and good knowledge both of the subject and of students' strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they plan well and cater for a wide range of students' prior attainment. They present tasks that consolidate and extend students' mathematical aptitudes. In most lessons, rigorous approaches are used. Teachers refer to correct terminology and prove relationships and methods of solution from first principles. In this way, students are suitably directed to think about underlying structures of mathematics, rather than just learning the formulae needed to solve problems. Because of their very positive attitudes to learning, students respond well and make good progress. On occasions, though, in their haste to complete sections of the course, teachers omit logical steps in explanations. In these cases, although students complete exercises accurately, their understanding of the concepts involved is incomplete. Too few occasions are provided that allow students to pursue their own lines of investigation. Because of this, some opportunities are missed to broaden students' knowledge and understanding.
267. The department's procedures for assessment in the sixth form are very good. Through close monitoring of progress and detailed analyses of data about prior attainment, students are presented with realistic yet challenging targets for future success. These motivate students well and do much to keep the momentum of progress at a good level throughout the periods of study.
268. The sixth form provision in the subject is led and managed well. The members of staff, teaching at this level, work well as a team. They review and revise the curriculum and strategies for teaching and learning regularly. These actions ensure that students are taught well and make good progress. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Good relationships between the teachers and students mean that individuals are monitored well and receive good support.
- A very well organised, enthusiastic and effective department helps students to achieve well.

Area for improvement

- Students do not always have a good knowledge of the theory before they set out upon practicals.

269. In 2001, A-level results were well above the national average. Students' achievement, relative to their GCSE grades, was satisfactory. Girls outperformed boys. Over the past four years, numbers studying the course have been small. Standards have varied over a wide range showing no particular trend. At AS-level, in the same year, standards matched the national average, with boys and girls doing equally well. Four years ago, only five students chose to do chemistry in the sixth form. Subsequently, numbers taking the subject rose slowly and then very rapidly last year to 20. Almost all students who join the AS-level and A2 courses complete their studies.
270. The standards of work seen in the current Year 13 are average. They are satisfactory when compared to the grades that the students achieved at GCSE examinations.

This is a small group that could only be seen doing practical work to find the relative amounts of ferrous and ferric ions in a mixture. All handled the apparatus well. The standard of their knowledge was very variable. Whilst some could explain accurately the theory behind the method that they were using, others were unable to do so convincingly. Some students could not explain why transition elements exhibit several states of oxidation.

271. Students in Year12 show an above average standard of work and are achieving well. They are building upon their GCSE knowledge and skills well. This is evidenced by their work on enthalpy. In their practical, using Hess's Law to find the enthalpy change between potassium bicarbonate and potassium carbonate, they demonstrated good practical skills, especially in the precise use of graphs to provide an answer. Similarly, in a lesson concerned with past examination questions on the topic, many showed that they had a good understanding of the principles involved and, more importantly, those who did not took positive steps to rectify the gaps in their knowledge.
272. The quality of teaching is good. Students learn well as a result. This was especially so in Year 12 lessons seen. Here the teacher used a very good knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject well to produce interesting lessons, taught with broad perspectives. The teaching in Year 13 proved more difficult to evaluate as the two lessons seen were taken up by an assessed practical in which the teacher's role is necessarily limited. However, it was at least satisfactory. Strong features of the teaching are the clear explanations and the way in which students' questions are handled. When students do not understand, they are not usually told the answer. Rather, they are led towards it by skilfully placed questions from the teacher, which enable them to see it for themselves. Not only are the teachers good at circulating and promoting the individual students' capacity to solve difficulties, but also common problems are sensed, and then discussed, with the whole class. When teaching has been less successful, students have gained insufficient insight of the theory behind the practical work that they are doing. Whilst they can follow a recipe quite well, they have only limited ideas about why they are doing what they are doing and what it means. In some cases this is caused by absence from crucial lessons.
273. The quality of learning is good. Students work hard and most are keen to learn, although some are happier to be told and reassured by questioning than they are to reason for themselves. Learning is greatly helped by students' good relations with teachers, which results in a productive two-way traffic. Teachers are always willing to help and to give up their own time to do so. Teachers and students monitor progress well, identify individual weaknesses and set about remedying them. Homework is set and marked regularly. It is usually challenging and provides a useful extension to learning.
274. The subject is led well and managed effectively. Good schemes of work enable teachers to use their very good knowledge to present the subject in sufficient depth for the students to access high grades. They are written by the department and identify areas for development of key skills in science. Good systems for assessment are used well to identify individual weaknesses and to correct them, as well as to provide students with a useful insight into their probable AS/A2 grades. Good use is also made of assessment to modify the way the curriculum is taught. Such things enrich the curriculum as visits to the Royal Society of Chemistry lectures at the University of Plymouth and to France for study and to experience lectures. Teachers are enthusiastic, well qualified and work well as a unit. The accommodation is good. The resources are very good, deployed effectively and maintained well to support students' learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Biology

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

Strengths

- A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average.
- Students work well in practical lessons and make good progress with their practical skills.
- The accommodation and resources are good and support learning effectively in practical lessons.
- Students' positive attitudes and good relationships with teachers assist learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not always have a good knowledge of the theory before they set out upon practicals.
- Insufficient use is made of data logging to support teaching and learning.
- Marking and monitoring of written work and attention to note taking are not always good enough.
- Schemes of work need to be produced and the teaching of them monitored.

275. The GCE A-level examination results for 2001 were well above the national average for all maintained schools. There was an increase in the proportion of students achieving the higher grades, A and B. No boys were entered for the examination. Over the past four years numbers have been small; in 1999 there were no students at all. Standards have varied over a wide range showing no particular trend. Overall, when account is taken of the students' GCSE grades at the start of the course, their achievement is good. In 2000, 14 students chose to do sixth form biology of whom five continued their study of the subject to A2 level in Year 13. In Year 12 currently, 29 students following the AS-level course. Their achievement, to date, is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment.

276. The standards of work seen in the current Year 13 are not as high as those suggested by the well above average examination results of 2001. Standards are average and are satisfactory when compared to the grades that the students achieved at GCSE examinations. This is a small group that could only be seen doing a practical investigation to find out the effect of bile salts on the action of the enzyme lipase. Students were developing a sound understanding of how to produce a hypothesis based on scientific knowledge and understanding and about the aspects that need to be considered when planning a method for measuring the rate of lipase action. Their depth of knowledge of enzymes and enzyme activity was weak and certainly insufficient to achieve the higher grades A and B. When questioned on other aspects of the biology syllabus, such as the structure and function of a cell, respiration and photosynthesis, they demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of basic facts and concepts.

277. Standards of work seen in Year 12 are average and satisfactory when compared to the students' GCSE results. There are two biology classes, and students are grouped according to attainment. Three lessons were observed, two with one class and one with the other, but as with Year 13, they could only be seen doing practical work. Both classes were carrying out an investigation to identify which of two samples of 'mock blood' represented that of an adult male living at sea level, undergoing regular aerobic training, and which represented a similar male training at high altitude. A small number of students in the top group were developing good practical skills, handling

the apparatus very well and working out how best to use it, in order to get the most accurate results. Progress across the two groups, overall, was satisfactory. Students' did not have a good background knowledge or clear understanding of the structure and function of red cells and of the transport of oxygen, including the Bohr effect.

278. Teaching is good. Individual teachers plan their lessons effectively to provide a suitable introduction to the subject and to cover the syllabus. Practical lessons provide effective development of practical skills. However, the teaching of theory is narrow in its approach. In the best lessons, teachers use their good knowledge of examination requirements to prepare their students well for the coursework or practical component of the examination. When teaching is less successful, students have gained insufficient insight of the theory behind the practical work that they are doing. Whilst they can carry out a practical planned by the teacher, they have limited ideas about what they are doing and what it means. The teaching of theory in both Year 12 and 13 proved difficult to evaluate, as all the lessons were taken up with practical work and there was limited involvement by the teacher. Analysis of students' work highlighted shortcomings in the checking of understanding through the quality of note taking and in the marking of work. Most teachers mark work in encouraging ways but clear indications about how well students are progressing are not given often enough. The best practice gives students cause for thought in encouraging further progress and checks that comments have been acted upon.
279. Students' learning is good. Students are attentive, work productively and respond well to their teachers. The level of mutual respect amongst students is evident in the open way they interact with their teachers and with one another. Lower attaining students are not confident in offering ideas in more open discussion, do not reason for themselves and are not always brought into question and answer dialogues as much as they could be. Students take a keen interest in practical lessons and develop their practical skills well.
280. The independent work which students undertake is prepared well. The set tasks complement the content of the lessons well. Most students extract information from books and use ICT to help them to compile good notes. Some students, however, have poorly organised notes and have little understanding of what they mean. Skills in ICT are developing, but progress in data-logging techniques is hindered by a lack of appropriate resources.
281. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being led and managed well. Staff work together as a team with a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The monitoring of teaching to raise standards further is not rigorous enough. Schemes of work are insufficiently developed to set the stage for improving further the quality of teaching and learning. They do not identify a range of approaches to encourage more effective learning. However, improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and students help students to make satisfactory progress.
- Students' work improves as a result of regular assessment.

- The number of students taking physics is increasing.

Areas for improvement

- Results in the A-level examinations were well below national averages in 2001.
- A small amount of teaching is poor.
- The quality of a minority of students' folders is unsatisfactory.

282. Standards in the A-level examination in 2001 were well below the national average. Results in the AS-level examination were broadly average. In relation to their GCSE grades in Year 11, both sets of students performed largely as expected. In the last four years, a total of 19 students have taken the A-level paper, and all but one have obtained at least a pass grade.
283. The rate of retention of students has been high, even though overall numbers have been low in recent years. There are indications that numbers are now increasing. A small minority of each year group are female. Their standards are in line with those of the male students.
284. The standard of work of current students in Year 13 is average. Students' achievements are largely as predicted based on GCSE results. There was a wide range of attainment in the present Year 12 group when they started the course. Their achievements are satisfactory overall. They are particularly involved in their work when undertaking practical exercises.
285. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but vary from poor to very good. The best features of teaching are that teachers are well qualified and that relationships with students are very good. In the best lessons, students are challenged to think for themselves and to use their initiative, as in a lesson in which they worked in groups to take measurements of the acceleration of a toy car as it moved down a slope. When covering theoretical work, teachers are less skilful at involving students. As a result, a large proportion of students in these sessions are largely passive, as they do not respond to the teacher's questions. The planning of individual lessons concentrates too much on the content to be covered, with insufficient thought about creating the best learning opportunities for students. With the wide range of attainment in Year 12, the insufficient provision of work of a suitable range of difficulty hinders students from working at the rate most appropriate for their own levels of attainment.
286. The leadership and management of physics are satisfactory. The planning of the physics course and the work of individual teachers are sound. The regular assessment of students' work enables teachers to monitor their progress and to ensure they are on target for their national tests. The department also monitors national and college data to provide information on the performance of the department and of individual teachers. A minority of students do not maintain their files in good condition, which is a disadvantage when revising for examinations.
287. The regular use of computers adds interest to the subject and flexibility in teaching. Students use computers confidently for retrieving information and when taking measurements of speed and acceleration. Numeracy skills are used regularly. There is less emphasis on the development of literacy skills, though students use their own words when recording the results of investigations.
288. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The number of students taking physics has increased, and satisfactory progress has been made.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

289. The focus was on the courses in product design and food technology. This is the second year of taking the course at AS-level and A2-level. Product design is the core area but students can select from textiles, resistant materials or graphics as their optional area. The college was a pilot school for a national examination board's new A-level course two years ago. However, the pilot course proved to be quite different from the present course. Students in Year 12 and 13 are taught together. Retention of students on the courses is good; only two students have failed to continue with the course in the past two years.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students are highly motivated and are very positive about the subject.
- Planning and monitoring of the courses are thorough and use staff's expertise very effectively.

Areas for improvement

- Students have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills of independent learning.
- Rooms for teaching lessons in theory are sometimes too small for the number of students.

290. A-level results in 2001 were below the national average. Thirteen candidates took the examination and all of them gained A-E grades. A small proportion gained A-B grades. Standards seen in lessons match what is expected nationally. A few students in food and textiles are working at standards above the national average. Numbers taking the courses have increased considerably. There are six candidates taking product design in Year 13. Their results at AS-level in the main compare favourably with their achievements at GCSE. Their predicted grades at A2-level are above the levels achieved at AS-level examinations. The group is making good progress now they realise what the standard of work expected is of them. In Year 12 currently, 25 students are taking the course in product design of which nearly half are specialising in resistant materials. There are six students taking food technology. The predicted grades for AS-level examinations indicate good achievement compared with the students' GCSE grades. A small proportion took the GNVQ course in ICT; the skills they have acquired have benefited their progress at AS-level. Achievement is good for the majority of Year 12. Only a few students have found the requirement of these courses more demanding than they had anticipated. The progress of male and female students is similar. The small number of visually-impaired students are making good progress.

291. The quality of teaching is very good and in lessons the quality of learning is often very good. However, because students do not always have the opportunity to develop individual learning skills, particularly research skills, learning is good rather than very good. Students in Year 13 discuss and reason in depth the different methods of transferring designs to packaging and the difference between economical packaging and that of top-of-the-range products. One project in Year 13 successfully used computer-aided design to develop a skateboard. Very good graphical skills were

evident in a project of redesigning an Indian restaurant. Very good teaching of types, uses and properties of plastics enabled students successfully to relate their understanding to everyday appliances. The excellent structure of a food technology lesson in Year 12 helped to reinforce students' knowledge of the versatility of fats and their uses in food manufacturing. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is a great motivator for students. A recent visit to the Design Centre, the Victoria and Albert museum and the product-development kitchens of a national retailer have helped to widen students' understanding of the importance played by design in industry. Good basic skills are continually being developed in lessons by reading technical information aloud and by teachers continually checking students' understanding of terminology. Where and when appropriate, ICT is used well to support learning. Assessment is continual and students are informed well of their progress and areas that need improvement. Teachers have been recently trained in the teaching of the new courses in the sixth form and are fully aware of previous problems. They are now more confident and competent in their teaching and in providing the support that the students require in order to gain good grades.

292. The rooms for teaching the theoretical aspects of the courses are too small for the size of groups involved. This has a slightly restrictive effect on the range of activities for teaching and learning.
293. Students' attitude to learning is very good. They participate in discussion and can give reasoned answers to quite difficult concepts. The after-college study sessions are well attended. Students use the facilities within the department regularly when space is available. They value greatly the support and encouragement given to them by their teachers. Students' ability to research, investigate and confidently understand complex issues is not always evident. Teachers try very hard to build students' self-confidence. Students lack good skills in independent study. In discussion, students articulate their projects in depth with great enthusiasm.
294. The leadership and management of the department are very good. A good team spirit exists. Detailed evaluations of how students are progressing and changes in the methods of teaching are reviewed regularly. Resources are used well. Teaching is planned to maximise teachers' particular strengths. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

295. The focus was on the advanced vocational certificate in education course. The examination course is in its second year. In Year 13, three students are taking the course. Several students began the course in Year 12 but either they did not complete the course or left college at the end of Year 12. Retention in Year 12 is good. The course started with 21 students and there are 19 currently on the course. Students in Years 12 and 13 are taught together.

ICT

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

Strengths

- Good teaching enables students to make good progress particularly in their acquisition of skills.
- Students are highly self-motivated and enjoy the subject.
- Currently retention of students in Year 12 is good; all are making good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Students currently in Year 13 did not receive ICT lessons after Year 7. As a consequence, their lack of skills hindered their performance in Year 12.
296. The AVCE results in 2001 were below those found nationally. Of the five candidates, one gained a distinction, one failed and three gained passes. Several students failed to complete their coursework and did not enter the examination. There are no national comparisons available because of the newness of the examination.
297. Standards of work seen in lessons broadly match what is found nationally. Most students are making good progress. The attainment of the three students on the Year 13 course varies from a predicted A-level equivalent pass at grade C to passes equivalent to AS grades. Eight of the students on the Year 12 course took GNVQ intermediate examination in Year 11 and a few gained distinctions and merits. Of the 11 students who did not take ICT courses in Year 11, a few took office practice studies and, as a result, developed good ICT skills. The predicted AS-equivalent results indicate generally good achievement based on the results in Year 11 both for male and female students. Four females are predicted the equivalent of grade B at AS-level with one having the potential to attain an A grade. Five boys and one girl are predicted a C grade; other students are expected to attain D or E grades. Those students who took GNVQ intermediate course have the advantage of having learned good ICT skills. Nevertheless, several of the other students have quickly acquired a good range of skills and are making good progress.
298. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers give appropriate help to students by offering alternative solutions and extending the students' original ideas. The good individual guidance has enabled students to become confident users of a wide range of applications. For example, one project by a third-year student contained very detailed and professional documentation on transport. These documents indicated a range of ICT skills and included desktop publishing of a bus timetable that was of very high quality. Teachers give very clear guidance to students on the development of their documents for their portfolios. The unit being developed is on communicating information to real organisations. Students have been successfully encouraged to develop material for organisations that they find interesting. Several students are producing news sheets and letters using desktop publishing that incorporate good use of frames, imported images and appropriate colours. Other students could use spreadsheets to plan the requirements for resources and schedules of work, for example, for a fitness centre. The continual assessment of their work by teachers is enabling students to perfect work and improve the quality and overall grade. Interim assessments are a clear indicator as to how well each individual is achieving. In the majority of cases, achievement is good. Students were thoroughly prepared for their first examination in January. The support material they could take into the examination was beneficial. The teachers have recognised the problems that arose during the first year of the examination course. They have amended and improved their schemes of work accordingly and are now more confident of students' success in examinations.
299. The students are self-motivated. They often use the ICT facilities out of lesson time. Some female students are particularly well motivated but both male and female students who had not taken the GNVQ in Years 10 and 11 have worked hard to catch up on their skills. The quality of work and general presentation are high. All in Year 12 are currently on task to complete the AS course. Several students stated that ICT is

the favourite of their optional choices. Very good relationships between teachers and students help to create a good atmosphere for learning.

300. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Problems have been recognised and appropriate action taken. Facilities are good and are used and maintained well. The quality of provision in the sixth form is good. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

301. In physical education, the focus was on provision for the A-level and AS-level courses. These courses are taught as part of the confederation's joint provision.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Joint sixth form arrangements permit students to study physical education at A-level.
- Commitment of students is good. They work hard and achieve what should be expected.
- Teaching and learning are good and promote good relationships among students

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always pay enough attention to the individual needs of students to ensure that students of all levels of attainment receive suitably challenging work.
- Students lack encouragement to research and read more widely in order to extend their answers and achieve higher grades.

302. In 2001, results at A-level and AS-level were average. Small numbers of students are involved so national comparisons are not valid, nor are comparisons between boys and girls. Analysis shows that students achieve what might be expected when compared with their attainment at the end of Year 11.

303. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are average. Achievement is satisfactory. Students have a sound understanding of current issues in sport and recreation and can draw on examples from studies in several countries. In Year 12, students can analyse and evaluate a physical performance and suggest improvements. The higher attainers confidently link their practical experience to the theoretical principles underpinning their analysis. They show a competent understanding of the theories that are involved in learning a skill and the differences between skill and natural ability. Students have an adequate grasp of the technical language of the subject. A good feature of the work on analysis of performance is students' use of research and ICT. In other units of work, these skills are not used so well. Students' writing and skills of communication are sound. They talk about and explain their work but in some lessons are reluctant to do so. Many students continue their practical activities to a good standard in clubs and at county and regional level.

304. Students have good attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic about their involvement in the subject and happy with their choice of subject. All students starting the course completed it in 2001. The relationships between students and teachers of the three colleges involved in the joint course are good. Students correctly feel that the teaching is good and that the use of teachers from different colleges is a strength. They listen to the views of others and support each other when working in groups.

Students appreciate the good advice that they receive in the weekly mentoring sessions held in the 'home' college. Many students achieve their goal of continuing to study physical education when they leave college.

305. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject effectively in their clear explanations and in the way in which they develop students' understanding through skilful questioning. Lessons are planned with a clear structure to the learning. This helps students to consolidate and develop their understanding. The best teaching challenges students to take responsibility for their own learning. Work in folders shows good coverage of the syllabus's requirements. Teachers provide useful supporting materials to supplement the basic textbook. However, work in folders does not always show a match between tasks and the potential attainment of the students. Lower attaining students do not regularly research topics in depth and there is little extension work for the highest attainers. This aspect of individual challenge is demonstrated to better effect in the analysis of performance unit that reflects students' personal skills and interests.
306. Leadership and management of these courses are effective. Co-ordination of the courses across the three colleges is good. The confederated sixth form enables this subject to be offered when numbers would otherwise be too small for efficiency. Arrangements for the assessment and reporting of students' progress are satisfactory. An important and valued feature for Stoke Damerel students is the identification of a course leader, based at the college, for their personal and academic support.
307. Physical education in the sixth form was not reported in detail at the previous inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

308. The focus of the inspection in art and design was on the provision for A-level and AS-level courses. The focus of the inspection in drama was on the provision for A-level and AS-level courses.
309. Only a few students have taken music to A-level standard in recent years and results have been well below average. Currently, two students are studying music at AS-level in Year 12. Standards are below average. Performing skills are approaching average. Composing skills and students' understanding of harmony and devices are weak, mainly because of lack of prior study and experience. Students' knowledge of musical history and general musical knowledge is below average. Students' achievement is broadly satisfactory.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Students attained above average results in A-level and AS-level examinations in 2001.
- Good teaching helps students to achieve good standards.

Areas for improvement

- Continue efforts to give students opportunities to visit galleries.
- Extend accommodation to provide a dedicated space in which sixth form students can work.

310. In 2001, A-level results were very good, with four students attaining grade A and one a grade B. These students had similar attainments in their other subjects. The results, though small in statistical terms, show an improving trend, from below average in 1999, average in 2000 to above average in 2001. No students failed to complete the course.
311. The number of students who took the AS-level examination in 2001 was also small. One student was successful at grade B, three at grade C and one at grade D. No students failed to complete the course. These are good results and represent very good improvement since the previous inspection.
312. The college continues to offer A-level and AS-level courses. The take-up on the A-level course is similar to that in 2001. For the AS-level course, numbers have increased considerably. The standards of work of students seen during the inspection on both the A-level and the AS-level courses indicate good achievement and are above average. Painting, including painting in oils, drawing skills, problem solving and research are of a good standard. This represents satisfactory achievement from prior attainment at GCSE level in the case of the AS-level students, and good progress in the case of the A-level students.
313. Teaching is good. In consequence, students learn well. Some students on the AS-level course feel that they would have benefited from more direct teaching at an earlier stage (when the department was experiencing staffing difficulties). Others feel under pressure from the sheer number of other subjects they are taking. These factors slightly hinder performance in art and design, though the department is doing all it can to compensate for them. Ample time and good facilities are available for students to do research. Students do not visit galleries often enough to increase their knowledge and understanding of the work of artists. Lessons are planned well and demonstrations of, for example, techniques in oil painting are ably done. There is no dedicated space in which sixth form students can work. Attitudes to the subject are very positive. Students show high levels of maturity in their individual studies.
314. Work in the subject is led and managed well. Good progress has been made in staffing the department and in coming to grips with the new style of examinations and procedures for assessment both in the sixth form and the 11 to 16 section of the college. The lack of a suitable space in which sixth form students can work, the use of ICT as a creative tool and extending opportunities for students to visit galleries are areas for further development. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Drama

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

Strengths

- The attainment of boys is above average.
- Good relationships between teachers and students create a good climate for learning

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of girls is below average.
- A few students flounder because the work is too difficult for their capabilities.
- The assessment of written work is not rigorous enough so that students are unclear about their standards or how they could improve them.

315. In 2001, results in external examinations were below average. Students of drama gained slightly better results at A-level in drama than they attained in their other A-level subjects. Boys' results were above average and those for girls below average. Trends over time are inconsistent. A history of temporary staff and a variety in the students' prior attainment have contributed to this. The rate of retention of students on the courses is good and demonstrates students' commitment and their enjoyment of the subject.
316. The A-level and AS-level courses in drama draw on the success of the subject in the main college. Work seen during the inspection indicates standards that are below average and that reflects the results in external examinations. Students enter the course with below average standards. Their achievement is satisfactory. Students' practical skills in drama are average whereas their written work is below average. A small minority of students flounder because the course is too demanding. Students thoroughly enjoy the practical work in the subject. They work with the same relish and enthusiasm as those of the teacher. They have good skills in practical work and demonstrate a competent expertise. They develop their knowledge and understanding of the course and broaden their social and cultural awareness. Written work is less adequate and relatively sparse. Students do not sustain textual analysis or evaluate scripts coherently.
317. The teaching of drama in the sixth form is satisfactory. At times it is good. It concentrates on raising the achievements of students and is celebratory. An appropriate emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. The requirements for students to develop their own portfolios of work, visit theatres and empathise with others, help them to develop their skills of independent learning. Specialists, who are committed to the subject, teach drama and contribute to the wider education it affords the students. In a Year 12 lesson, students spoke authoritatively, using specialist vocabulary, about comic timing in the study of a Joe Orton play. Their work was professionally 'blocked' and demonstrated a fine appreciation of humour. In a Year 13 lesson, students combined team-building skills in their group work to devise an improvisation based on 'Trojan Women'. They offered trenchant observations on Greek theatre and its setting in a modern context.
318. A concerted approach to raising the standards of boys has been successful. Good schemes of work and planning of lessons have raised the attainment and aspirations of boys. However, a small number of students do not progress as well as they could, because the work is not always matched to their capabilities and they find it too difficult.
319. Learning is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are better in the practical sessions than in the lessons on theory in which students have to produce written work. The pace in these latter lessons is slower. Students' knowledge of their standards and potential are less secure. The motivation and enthusiasm of the students are good in practical drama but less so for their written assignments. This work is generally lacking in depth and sophistication. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students' standards are average and broadly match expectations based on their prior attainment in the subject.
320. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is improving after a period of instability and temporary staffing. The department is now staffed with permanent teachers who provide good support to the head of department.

Very good procedures of induction help to ensure continuity of learning. Students enhance their work through a very good programme of extra-curricular provision that includes regular prestigious productions, participation in the Plymouth Arts Festival and drama and dance festivals at the college. Assessment of written work is not sufficiently rigorous. Therefore students are not clear about how to improve. Students do not receive precise targets for improvement. The department is aware of this and is developing a system of assessment that aims to match work more closely to students' prior attainment and potential.

321. Accommodation is satisfactory. The drama department teaches in dedicated spaces using specialised equipment. Progress in lessons is hindered at times because these areas are often used for examinations and dining. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

322. The focus of the inspection in humanities was on the provision for the AS-level course in geography, which is taught as one of the confederation's joint courses, and for the A-level and AS-level courses in history.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Learning is good as a result of good teaching.
- Students' positive attitudes and interest enhance their learning.
- Very good marking helps students to reinforce their learning.

Areas for improvement

- A-level results have been unsatisfactory.
- Students do not sufficiently develop their skills of independent learning.

323. Geography has become a more popular choice for students in recent years. Both A-level and AS-level courses are offered. Good provision through co-operation with the two other colleges in the confederation enables viable groups to be taught. A high proportion of students go on to take courses with a geographical content at higher education.

324. In 2001, A-level results were below average. Most candidates attained a pass but no student reached the higher grades. Their achievement as measured from their prior attainment at GCSE was unsatisfactory. All students completed the course.

325. At the time of this inspection there was no Year 13 geography group. Standards of work seen in Year 12 are average. This represents good achievement compared with students' prior attainment in the subject. Most students understand the impact of human and physical processes on coastal erosion. Higher attaining students can interpret source material to answer questions for examinations well. They give good explanations of interlinked processes, for example, of how coastal towns change the flow of ground water and its subsequent impact on cliff erosion. Lower attaining students give answers that are more descriptive than evaluative. They do not explain, for example, when using a weather map, why weather conditions vary. Students use geographical terminology with increasing familiarity and understanding because of the

emphasis put upon this by their teachers. However, their skills as independent learners are not fully developed.

325. Teaching is good. As a result, all students make good progress with their learning. Teachers know their subject well and can add, expand and amplify points that help students to learn. Teachers use methods that make students think. Students are encouraged to research, discuss and analyse so that the concepts become clear. Lessons build from basic to more complex ideas. In a lesson on coastal features, for example, concepts of coastal erosion were clarified through discussion before students attempted a complex question. This enabled the students to give valid answers to the question. Teachers support students well with all aspects of their work. The quality of marking is very good. Comments from the teacher are detailed, helpful and concentrate on improving attainment. Assessments are given regularly. Teachers use these assessments very well to check how each student is progressing and to give appropriate guidance. Students' attitudes towards geography are good and assist their good pace of learning. They like the subject and are interested.
326. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are committed to raising standards. Teachers in the confederation work together well. The curriculum is planned well; it builds successfully upon students' prior knowledge. Opportunities for enrichment are good; fieldwork is a particular strength.
327. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

History

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

Strengths

- A-level results are improving.
- Students' positive attitudes promote good achievement.
- Very effective procedures and use of assessment help students to make good progress.

Area for improvement

- Students' skills to work independently are insufficiently developed.

328. Students' performance in A-level examinations over the past three years has shown a rising trend. Results in 2001 were above the national average. Although results at grades A and B were below average, the overall results at grades A to E were above. In 2001, results reflected the previous attainment of students, and their performance in history was similar to their grades in other subjects. The results in the new AS-level examination also reflect the previous attainment of students at GCSE. Overall, these results represent sound achievement.
329. Standards of work seen in the Year 12 and Year 13 groups are broadly average. Students achieve well and make good progress during the course. Year 13 students have a good grasp of the topics they are studying. They can analyse issues and trends successfully. This was demonstrated in a lesson on the development of the mass media in 20th century Britain, when students were able to identify common themes in the relationship between successive governments and the media during times of national crisis. Year 12 students, building on earlier work at GCSE, have a good understanding of aspects of German history in the 1920s and '30s. They have a

good grasp of the key changes and developments in two periods of 20th century British history. Students in both years are generally confident and fluent in discussion work, but they find written work more difficult. They have to work hard to organise and structure their work, as in a lesson when Year 12 students were preparing an essay on how Hitler consolidated his power in the early 1930s. However, students' skills in writing essays improve during the course. The written work of the best students is clear, effective and substantiated well.

330. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Sometimes it is very good. Teachers' very good expertise in the subject and enthusiasm for history successfully motivate students and encourage them in their learning. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. Key themes and ideas are effectively highlighted and emphasised for students, as in a lesson on the relations between government and media over Northern Ireland. Teachers use a good mix of methods so that students are fully involved in the work. In a Year 12 lesson on Hitler, a very good combination of activity in groups, probing questioning and clear explanations helped students to make very good progress. Marking is very good. It helps students improve their written work. Access to good facilities enables students to make appropriate use of ICT for purposes of research. The rapport between teachers and students is very good. The attitude of students to their work is very positive. They enjoy history and find it stimulating and challenging. They are well motivated and keen to succeed, which helps to explain their good achievement in the subject. However, some students lack confidence in their own skills of independent learning. They look unnecessarily for support from their teachers, for example over taking notes in lessons.
331. The leadership and management of history in the sixth form are good. They have been responsible for rising standards and increased numbers taking history. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Procedures for assessment are very good so that students' progress is closely and effectively monitored. Currently, students have access to only a limited range of texts, which reduces their opportunities for independent study.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

332. In English, the focus of the inspection was on the A-level and AS-level courses in English literature.
333. In modern foreign languages, the focus of the inspection was on Spanish, but work in French was also sampled. In the past, French and German have been the main foreign languages in the sixth form, although both have attracted only a few students each year. Rates of retention have been good; only one student failed to complete the course over the past three years. Results in recent years have been below average. Currently, no students in Year 13 are studying for the A2 course in French or German. Two students from the confederation are studying AS-level French in Year 12. Two AS-level French lessons were observed. In both the teaching was good. A-level Spanish has not been a feature of sixth form study over recent years. At present, three students are following the A2 course in Year 13. There are no students studying Spanish to AS-level in Year 12.

English literature

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

Strengths

- In 2001, AS-level results for most students were better than expected based on GCSE results.
- Students' attitudes are positive. Very few students leave without completing the courses.
- Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to enthuse the students.

Areas for improvement

- A-level results have been inconsistent in recent years and were well below average in 2001.
- Teaching does not fully meet the needs of lower attaining and less well-motivated students who do not participate actively in many lessons.
- Students' notes indicate limited basic study skills.

334. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Teaching is satisfactory. Most students work well and are positive about the course. The overall achievement of students in relation to their standards on entry to the sixth form is satisfactory.
335. Set against their levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form, students' achievement in English literature is satisfactory. A-level results in 2001 were well below national averages and showed a marked contrast to those of the previous year, which had matched national averages. A further contrast can be seen between these A-level results and the much better AS-level results for 2001, which indicated that a larger group of students had gained grades that, overall, were close to national averages. The college's value-added data, which measures the progress that students make over time, indicates that, taking A-level and AS-level results together, achievement is satisfactory over the two years in the sixth form. The inconsistent attendance of a small number of students is having an adverse impact upon their learning. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students.
336. Work seen during the inspection is average. Higher attaining students show good evidence in their folders of serious scholarship. They research topics for background study painstakingly, making good use of a variety of resources including the Internet. They compile thoughtful notes, for example on Margaret Atwood's novel, 'The Handmaid's Tale'. Work on extracts from Wordsworth's 'The Prelude' is often perceptive. However, in the folders of middle attaining and lower attaining students, the quality and amount of notes vary from good to unsatisfactory. The standard of written English is often well below average. In a few cases, the standard of note making suffers when motivation declines. Despite this, students generally make good progress in the quality of their written work as they move through Year 12. Early essays that fail to answer the question and are superficial in analysis, as for example seen in the early work on Philip Larkin's 'The Whitsun Weddings' poems, give way to much better organised and more thoughtful responses. By the time they are in Year 13, middle attaining students are coping very well with prose texts; their work on poetry remains satisfactory.
337. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students respond well to teachers' obvious enthusiasm and very good knowledge of English literature. Teachers have high expectations of students, evident in the way they manage classes and in the demanding assignments that they set. However, the work of lower attaining students lacks sufficient support to ensure that, for example, their notes and preparatory work for essays are detailed enough and focused suitably to produce the best final assignments. Marking is conscientious. Teachers are very positive in their comments on students' work. They offer good advice on what can be improved. Relationships in lessons between teachers and students are very good. Learning takes place in a positive atmosphere, as seen when Year 12 students were studying Tennessee

Williams' 'The Glass Menagerie' and enjoyed talking about how the central characters interacted in the early scenes. However, in most lessons, despite impressive contributions to discussions amongst the whole class by more confident students, quieter students are not often involved fully. Discussions in smaller groups, giving better opportunities for them to participate, are infrequent. Students' involvement in lessons is also reduced when the class teacher talks at length and only asks questions that require short responses or when activities remain unchanged for a whole lesson.

338. English literature is a popular AS-level and A-level subject. Very few students drop out of courses before they are completed. Students are very positive about all aspects of their courses. They enjoy their lessons and have great respect for the enthusiasm of their teachers. They feel that they are treated like adults in being expected to organise their own private study. They are clear about their standards of work and acknowledge that not all students in each group work with equal determination.
339. The leadership and management of sixth form English are satisfactory. Teachers assess and support students' progress well, although procedures for identifying under-achieving students are informal. Schemes of work cover the requirements for the examinations effectively. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the previous inspection. The department recognises that evaluating and developing current strategies for teaching sixth form students, including focus on study skills, is an area for development.

Spanish

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

Strengths

- All candidates attained above average results in AS-level examinations in Spanish in 2001.
- Students make good progress and achieve good standards in their own writing. They understand the written and spoken word well.
- Teaching is good; teachers have high expectations of their students.

Areas for improvement

- Students lack confidence in communicators. They are hesitant and lack fluency in speaking.
- Despite good grammar and syntax, students are careless and make basic errors in their writing.
- Students have not developed as fully as they might as independent learners.

340. No student has undertaken the A-level Spanish course over recent years. The three students currently studying the A2 course all completed the AS-level course last year. All three students, two male and one female, gained above average, B grade, passes.
341. Attainment in all the basic skills of the subject except speaking is above average. All students are working towards broadly average grades in their A2 examinations. All have made good progress from their GCSE starting points. The slightly higher standards achieved by the male students reflect their higher attainment on entry to the sixth form. All students gather the gist of spoken or written Spanish easily and pick out detail from it. They have a wide command and good recall of vocabulary and idiom. They have developed a mature style to their writing and are capable of handling

complex, sophisticated structures. They can argue their case coherently across a range of literary and non-literary topics. However, they are careless and often do not scrutinise their work rigorously, even though they word process their final drafts and, accordingly, fail to eradicate these mistakes. None of them communicate with confidence in Spanish. Their pronunciation is satisfactory, but their fluency and intonation are weak. They are unwilling to take risks when speaking, do not seek what they do not know through the medium of Spanish and are easily confounded by the unfamiliar. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students receive a wide range of tasks to expand their experience of vocabulary, idiom and syntax. They have good help for developing their linguistic skills. They regularly evaluate their own and each other's work. Their progress is good through constant emphasis on how to improve from past mistakes and clear targets for future development. Good use is made of available resources. Students have good access in college to ICT systems for use of the Internet for purposes of research and to improve their skills in rapid reading and redrafting.

342. The high expectation, commitment and infectious enthusiasm of their teacher are reflected in the commitment and enthusiasm of, in particular, the male students. They have a clear idea of the demands of the current course, their progress so far and how Spanish will help them in their chosen paths of career. However, at present, they are provided with too much information rather than being guided into researching material for themselves. As a result, they are too dependent on their teacher, are reluctant to read around the subject for themselves and have not developed sufficiently as independent learners.
343. The leadership and management of Spanish in the sixth form are good. The effective links between the college and the confederation ensure that students have the opportunity to continue their study of French, German or Spanish, even if the numbers are small. Good lines of communication exist so that students' progress is monitored frequently and regularly. Students have access to native speakers and opportunities to visit Spain, which improve their confidence and broaden their knowledge of contemporary Spanish society well.