

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CHEADLE HULME COLLEGE**

Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106140

Headteacher: Mr R Dixon

Reporting inspector: Mr D Cox  
10297

Dates of inspection: 8 – 12 October 2001

Inspection number: 195471

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 -16

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Cheadle Hulme College  
Woods Lane  
Cheadle Hulme  
Cheadle  
Cheshire

Postcode: SK8 7JY

Telephone number: 0161 4857201

Fax number: 0161 4866031

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Aynsley-Smith

Date of previous inspection: 27 October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10297	D Cox	Registered Inspector		<p>The characteristics and effectiveness of the school</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements</p> <p>Teaching and learning</p> <p>Leadership and management</p> <p>Issues for action</p>
13395	J Illingworth	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>Students' welfare, health and safety</p> <p>Partnership with parents and carers</p>
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	
11933	D Driscoll	Team inspector	Design and technology. Information and communication technology	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	Vocational education. Special educational needs	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English. English as an additional language	

19026	B Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	History	
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
16548	D Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art and design. Music	
16548	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education	
4676	M Griffiths	Team inspector	Special educational needs (physically disabled)	

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Cheadle Hulme College is larger than most other secondary schools, and is a mixed 11 to 16 comprehensive school, situated in Cheadle Hulme, which is a residential area in Stockport. There are 1351 students on roll which is similar to when the college was last inspected. The college takes students mainly from the local area but students from some districts of Manchester also attend the college. Although there is a fairly large spread of social backgrounds, the overall social-economic circumstance of the students is average.

The college has a higher than average proportion of students with English as an additional language, 5 per cent (62 students), which is double that noted in the previous report. There are 6 students at an early stage of language acquisition. Whilst the college attracts students from a wide spread of attainment, the attainment of students on entry is average. There are 274 students on the special educational needs register; which is broadly average, and double that noted in the previous report. There are 40 students with Statements of Special Educational Need, which is above the national average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average at 11 per cent and is lower than at the time of the last inspection.

Since the last inspection the college has become a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) designated Language College and a designated Training School. The college is also a local education authority designated school for physically disabled students.

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

This is a good college. The good leadership provided by the headteacher, senior staff and the governing body has been successful in bringing about a commitment to ensuring that students achieve well. The good quality teaching in Years 7 to 9 ensures that students' levels of attainment are improved whilst they are at the college. The college is providing good value for money.

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

- The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to students achieving well.
- Students attain well above average standards in music, English, mathematics, history, geography and business studies.
- The provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The inclusiveness of the college is a real strength.
- Resources have been used effectively to improve standards in modern foreign languages where standards are now well above average.
- Students have good attitudes to their work and their personal development is good.

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

- The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, although satisfactory overall, is not as good as it is in Years 7 to 9.
- The quality of monitoring systems is not systematic enough and the application of college policies is not consistent.
- The quality of teaching and learning in art and design is unsatisfactory and leads to unsatisfactory achievement. The leadership and management of art and

design is poor.

- The quality of teaching in science although satisfactory, is not as good as that found in English and mathematics and as a consequence the standards that students attain are lower.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their full entitlement to design and technology and therefore some groups of students are underachieving.

*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 satisfactory progress since the last inspection in January 1997. Results at GCSE have fluctuated from year to year although the proportion of students attaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A\*-G has risen significantly in the most recent set of examinations. The overall quality of teaching is similar to that noted in the previous report. The college's response to the key issues identified in the previous report has been satisfactory. The provision for students with special educational needs is much improved. Attitudes and behaviour have changed little since the previous inspection. The college has maintained the strengths that existed then, notably students' good or very good response to learning in the majority of lessons. However, there is still more to do to further improve the behaviour of a minority at break and in the lunch hour, and in some classrooms. The college development plan has been improved and priorities are more precise. The statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 are now met fully although the National Curriculum requirements for design and technology are still not met. Statutory requirements for collective worship are still not met.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b> well above A average above average B average C below average D well below E average
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	B	

Results in the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds were above the national average in English and mathematics and average in science. In comparison with similar schools results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and below average in science. The attainment of both boys and girls was similar. The trend in the college's results has been in line with the national trend.

Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were above the national average. The attainment of both boys and girls was similar. The trend in the college's results has been below the national trend although this has been reversed in 2001. These results represent good levels of achievement for students who joined the college with levels of attainment that were average. Challenging targets for improving the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A\* to G have been set and the college has been successful in meeting these targets. As a designated specialist Language College additional targets are set. All of the modern foreign languages taught exceeded the targets set for them by the college.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average in all subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, art and design, and religious education where standards are average. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average in English, mathematics, music, history, geography, business studies and vocational areas; above average in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, physical education and religious education where standards are average.

Students with special educational needs including those with physical disabilities achieve well and make good progress towards their individual targets. Higher attaining students, including those who are particularly gifted or talented, also make good progress. Students for whom English is an additional language mostly make good progress.

#### STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have good attitudes to college and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most students accept the college's code of conduct and respect its rules.
Personal development and relationships	The quality of personal development is good. Students become more self-disciplined and mature in their attitudes as they progress up the college and relationships are good.
Attendance	Students' attendance is satisfactory.

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. In Years 10 and 11 there is more unsatisfactory teaching than in Years 7 to 9; teaching is less than satisfactory in one lesson in ten in Years 10 and 11.

In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in music; good in all other subjects except science, design and technology and physical education where it is satisfactory and

art and design where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in music and vocational areas; good in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, physical education and religious education where it is satisfactory and art and design where it is unsatisfactory. However, there is a significant variation in the quality of teaching in science which varies from very good to unsatisfactory.

One significant strength in the teaching is the way that learning support assistants work with teachers to ensure that students with physical and other disabilities are able to take part in lessons and make the same progress as other students. Other strengths lie in the way that teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Teachers are good at improving students' reading and writing and, although there is no whole college approach to the teaching of numeracy, teachers do well. Teachers' expectations are high in Years 7 to 9 and students respond well to the high expectations of the teachers, and their behaviour and attitudes are good. They show interest and excitement in what they are learning. In the best lessons teachers enabled students to discover for themselves, using the students' own experiences to aid development of understanding. Teachers manage students well in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 the management of students is satisfactory. Homework is used appropriately across the college.

Teaching of students with special educational needs and for those students for whom English is an additional language is good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Despite some significant strengths, the curriculum is unsatisfactory as it fails to meet statutory requirements. The quality and range of opportunities in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory overall. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very broad and there is a wide range of options to meet the varying needs of different groups of students.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good. Provision for students with physical disabilities is good. They all make a full and active contribution to the life of the college.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Students for whom English is an additional language mostly make good progress in the college. Other students, as well as teachers, show a willingness to help them. A minority of students was finding some difficulty in following lessons and were receiving less additional support than might be expected.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory and the provision for moral social and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its students	The college has satisfactory procedures for promoting students' welfare and supporting their educational progress. The quality of personal support and guidance is good.

Many students in Years 10 and 11 do not study design and technology and underachieve as a result. In Years 10 and 11, lessons in physical education are based totally on games, which is too restricted to meet the needs of the National Curriculum.

There is a satisfactory partnership between home and college, and the contribution that parents make to their children's learning raises standards of attainment.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff are providing good leadership. There is a clear sense of direction and a purposeful atmosphere in which all students are encouraged to give of their best. Monitoring of the work of the college is not systematic enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very good understanding of the college's work. The governing body is effective and has established close links with the college

The school's evaluation of its performance	The college applies the principles of best value well and continues the good work noted in the previous report.
The strategic use of resources	The college makes very good use of its available resources and specific grants.

The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. There are adequate resources and the standard of accommodation is satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most parents are very positive about the standards in English, mathematics and music.</li> <li>• The support provided by the special educational needs department.</li> <li>• Students have good attitudes.</li> <li>• The college is open and welcoming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college working more closely with parents.</li> <li>• Higher attainers are not being challenged enough.</li> <li>• Parents being kept better informed about how their child is progressing.</li> <li>• The college setting a more appropriate amount of work to be done at home.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The majority of students attain well above average standards in English, mathematics and music. The support for students with special educational needs is good. The college is open and welcoming.

The inspection team found that the annual reports do not give parents an accurate picture of the students' learning and of targets for further progress. Homework is generally appropriate. Higher attaining students do achieve well and the college makes good provision for gifted and talented students. The college makes satisfactory arrangements to encourage parents to promote their children's learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The majority of students entered the college with levels of attainment that, overall, were average. By the end of Year 9, the standards that students attain are above average and this represents a good level of achievement given their prior levels of attainment. By the end of Year 11, the standards that students attain remain above average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement.
2. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 was above the national average in English and mathematics and average in science. In comparison with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were well above average in mathematics; above average in English but below average in science. Taking all three subjects together, results were above the national average for all schools and average when compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals. The attainment of girls was broadly similar to that of boys. The trend in the college's results is broadly in line with the national trend.
3. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the proportions of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C and A\* to G were above the national averages. The rise in the proportion of students attaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A\* to G represents a significant improvement over recent years. The improvement in the proportion of students attaining five or more passes at grades A\* to G was central to the college's development plan and a key area for improvement identified by senior managers.
4. Overall, in the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were above the national average when compared to all schools and above average when compared to similar schools. The attainment of both boys and girls was similar. Over the last five years the trend in the college's results has been below the national trend although this has been reversed in 2001.
5. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were far above the national average in music and business studies; well above average in English, English literature, mathematics, geography, history, French and Italian; above average in physical education and short course religious education and average in science, art and design and German. Results were slightly above average in design and technology. Students' best results compared to their performance in other subjects were in music, modern languages and English literature. Their worst results were in art and design, science and physical education.

6. The results represent a good level of achievement given the students' attainment when they joined the college.
7. The headteacher and the governing body have set challenging targets for improvement particularly for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A\* to G. The most recent results indicate that the college has been successful in meeting these targets.
8. As a designated specialist Language College additional targets are set. All of the modern foreign languages taught exceeded the targets set for them by the college and the DfES. The college has exceeded the national target set by the DfES for Language Colleges of more than fifty per cent of students to study two languages in Years 10 and 11. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average in French and Italian, and broadly average in German. Results have risen steadily from the already good levels at the last inspection.
9. Standards of literacy are above average. The college's approach to literacy has been well co-ordinated. Some subjects, including English, history and geography have strategies in place, whilst others are yet to be more fully involved.
10. Students' reading skills are good and sufficiently well developed to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum, except for a small minority. Most notably in English and history, students are set many tasks which require them to read extensively, to conduct their own research and generally to find pleasure in reading. Elsewhere other opportunities are provided but they tend to be more limited.
11. Students' writing skills are good. Students broaden and improve their writing skills in English, history and geography. Students structure their writing to best effect and re-draft it so as to improve its quality. Opportunities are provided for extended writing in a number of subjects, including English, history, science and modern foreign languages. There is a lack of consistency over the extent to which teachers correct errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
12. Standards of numeracy are above average. The majority of subjects in the college make a sound contribution to developing numeracy skills. In science, there are opportunities for students to use their understanding of formulae in calculations and they plot line graphs of rates of chemical reaction. Their analysis of graphs is weak and the ability to predict the shape of the graph below expectations. In physical education, students take physical measurements of pulse and heartbeat and work out the target training zone. In outdoor education, they use their skills in measuring. Work in foreign modern languages contributes well to numeracy skills. Students use tables for results of a survey on likes and dislikes in order to compare them using bar graphs. Percentages are used well in geography to calculate the percentage growth of population. In design and technology students measure accurately. They

design packaging to support their work on batch production. They understand the concept of scale and use this effectively when producing working drawings.

13. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average in all subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, art and design, and religious education where standards are average.
14. In Years 7 to 9 students achieve very well in history and music and well in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology and physical education where achievement is satisfactory and in art and design where achievement is unsatisfactory. Students' achievement in science is not as good as that in English and mathematics because teaching is only satisfactory and is less demanding of students. In art and design, work fails to challenge or excite students and the atmosphere in lessons is often too relaxed. As a result, students are too relaxed in their approach, producing work that is often neat but lacks originality or creativeness. Also in art and design there is no agreement on what constitutes good standards.
15. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average in English, mathematics, music, history, geography, business studies and vocational areas; above average in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, physical education, art and design and religious education where standards are average.
16. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve very well in mathematics, history, music, business studies and vocational areas. Students achieve well in all other subjects with the exception of science, information and communication technology and physical education where achievement is satisfactory and art and design where achievement is unsatisfactory. In design and technology, those students who follow a course of study in design and technology make satisfactory progress. Students who do not continue with their studies are not receiving their statutory entitlement and are underachieving. Students in art and design continue to underachieve because of the same reasons identified in Years 7 to 9.
17. The rate at which students make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards achieved by students are higher than expected.
18. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls except in science in Years 10 and 11 where the achievement of girls is better than that of the boys. Students from all levels of prior attainment achieve well at the college.
19. Students with special educational needs achieve well at the college and make good progress towards their individual targets. A good indication of the achievement of students with special educational needs is seen in GCSE results. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining five A\* to G passes was above the national average and above average when compared with colleges

taking students from a similar background. The number of students gaining one A\* to G pass was also above the national average.

20. Higher attaining students, including those who are particularly gifted or talented, also make good progress as a result of the specific provision that is being made for them, such as taking GCSE in mathematics a year earlier and then going on to study for AS level. In modern foreign languages provision is made for students to study more than two languages. In music gifted and talented students make very good progress because of very good teaching, and also because of the high quality instrumental lessons from visiting teachers.
21. Students for whom English is an additional language mostly make good progress in the college. Other students, as well as teachers, show a willingness to help them. A minority of students were finding some difficulty in following lessons and were receiving less additional support than might be expected.
22. Students with physical disabilities make good progress. An excellent inclusion philosophy enables students to have full access to the curriculum, except for the few who are disadvantaged due to the severity of their disability. The very good quality support received by students enables students to make good progress.

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

23. Students have good attitudes towards college, and their positive outlook raises standards of attainment and promotes academic progress. Their relations with adults and each other are good and help to provide an environment that is conducive to learning. Students also make good personal progress, becoming more independent and responsible during their years in the college. Their attendance and behaviour are satisfactory.
24. Students have good attitudes to college. Students are keen to learn. They come to lessons expecting to acquire knowledge and to develop new skills, and are eager to make a constructive contribution. They participate fully in extra-curricular activities and, when offered the opportunity in Years 10 and 11, are willing to try out unfamiliar subjects. On the whole, girls adopt a more positive approach to their learning than boys do. For example, they are more conscientious about completing their work and presenting it neatly. Responses to lessons also vary according to levels of attainment, with higher attaining students being more eager to learn than lower attainers. However, it is the quality of teaching that has the greatest impact on attitudes to learning. In lessons where teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks, students respond by settling down quickly and staying on task. They value good teaching, and when they receive it they show interest in the subject and take pride in their work. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well. When teaching is uninspiring, students go off task and become restless and noisy. In a few instances, such as a physical education lesson that was observed during the inspection, they are rude and unco-operative, and their poor attitudes have an adverse effect on their learning.

25. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most students accept the college's code of conduct and respect its rules. They socialise well at breaks and lunch times, treat property with care, and behave well in lessons, where they listen carefully to teachers and follow instructions. On the other hand, there is some unacceptable behaviour and the college has a hard core of difficult students, as the relatively large number of exclusions shows. Verbal abuse, fighting and disrupting lessons are the main reasons for exclusion. Challenging behaviour in class is closely correlated to unsatisfactory teaching. Students misbehave when teachers' management skills are weak and the pace of lessons is slow. A minority distracts the majority, and the learning and progress of the whole class suffers as a result. With regard to out of class behaviour, students say that there is some bullying and name-calling. As at the time of the last inspection, there is also some immature and boisterous behaviour when students are moving around the college or waiting to enter classrooms. At times they run along the corridors, shout and jostle one another, and show little consideration for other people. A minority ignores teachers who try to call them to order. Their behaviour contrasts with that of the majority of students who are polite, orderly and show respect for members of staff.
26. Relations between staff and students, and between students themselves, are harmonious and friendly. The good quality of relationships within the college creates an environment that enhances pastoral care and promotes learning. With few exceptions, students respect one another's feelings, are tolerant, and are willing to listen to opinions different from their own. The way in which they accept and support physically disabled students is a major strength of the college.
27. The quality of personal development is good. Students become more self-disciplined and mature in their attitudes as they progress up the college, although there are some members of Years 10 and 11 who behave in a juvenile fashion when unsupervised. The majority responds well to opportunities to accept responsibility, for example older students arrange fund-raising events and successfully complete work experience placements. In all year groups students show that they are capable of using their initiative and organising their work. They make good use of the library, and of information and communication technology such as the Internet, to carry out their own research. Most students develop well as independent learners. They are willing to take responsibility for their academic work, and this contributes positively to their attainment and progress
28. Students' attendance is satisfactory. The attendance rate for the academic year 2000/01 was in line with the national average for secondary schools, and there were no year groups where attendance fell below 90 per cent. Only a small number of students are regularly absent or late for college. The majority attends college regularly and punctually, and can therefore take advantage of all the opportunities for learning that it offers.
29. Attitudes and behaviour have changed little since the previous inspection. The college has maintained the strengths that existed then, notably students' good or very good response to learning in the majority of lessons. However, there is

still more to do to further improve the behaviour of a minority at break and in the lunch hour, and in some classrooms.

#### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

30. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons seen. Two out of three lessons are taught to a standard that is at least good and one lesson in four is taught to a very good or excellent standard. Teaching was less than satisfactory in one lesson in twelve but never poor. The consistency of good teaching in Years 7 to 9 is a major strength of the college and leads to students acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. However, these figures do mask a variation between the different years. In Years 10 and 11 there is more unsatisfactory teaching than in Years 7 to 9; teaching is less than satisfactory in one lesson in ten in Years 10 and 11.
31. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in music; good in all other subjects except science, design and technology and physical education where it is satisfactory and art and design where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in music and vocational areas; good in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, physical education and religious education where it is satisfactory and art and design where it is unsatisfactory.
32. In art and design, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory because students have got used to a relaxed pace of learning in which there is insufficient challenge. Teachers are confident in their own skills, but do not always communicate the finer aspects of the subject in a way that drives up standards. In science, teaching and learning show wide variations in quality. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers' planning of work is mostly concerned with the topics to be covered, and pays insufficient attention to how students will learn. There are wide variations in their expectations of students' levels of concentration, and also in the depth of study.
33. One significant strength in the teaching is the way that learning support assistants work with teachers to ensure that students with physical and other disabilities are able to take part in lessons and make the same progress as other students. Teachers show an informed awareness of students' needs. Teachers are able to change the focus of a lesson to accommodate students' individual needs and they use support to maximum effect. This is often the result of effective preparation and consultation. Students with physical disabilities develop confidence as their interests are stimulated and their knowledge and understanding is developed alongside their peers.
34. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. For example, in English, teachers possess very good knowledge of their subject and are well aware of the requirements of the courses they are teaching. This means they are able to communicate to students what they need to do to

achieve high standards and they teach in such a way that students are appropriately challenged. This was seen happening in many lessons in all year groups. In a Year 10 lesson on a monologue by Carol Ann Duffy, for example, the teacher used skilful questioning to lead students to a deeper understanding of the poem's complexities.

35. Teachers are good at improving students reading and writing in individual lessons. Teachers in geography for example consistently use glossaries, word lists and reading aloud as part of their everyday lessons. When a student does read aloud, others listen attentively and so develop their powers of concentration. In history opportunities are regularly given to encourage speaking and writing. In a Year 9 lesson on the industrial revolution students were given guidance in the meaning of words like 'obsolete' and 'innovation' and this helped their understanding of writing about the work of James Watt and Matthew Boulton. There are missed opportunities as was seen in art and design when students were not provided with the opportunity to discuss abstract or symbolic art forms and led to a lack of interest by students.
36. There is no whole college approach to the teaching of numeracy but the teachers do well. In geography students' numeracy skills contribute well to their learning, especially skills involved with handling data. They create bar and line graphs of climatic change, and data collection and processing contributes well to their GCSE coursework. In science, on the other hand, there are limited opportunities for students to practise and develop their skills in solving numerical problems and doing calculations and students' graphical skills are underdeveloped.
37. Teachers plan their lessons well in Years 7 to 9. They use a variety of activities to keep students interested and maintain a good pace of learning. In music the planning of lessons is detailed and thorough. This gives a sense of solid structure to lessons with students very clear about what is expected by the end of lessons. However, in Years 10 and 11 the quality of planning is only satisfactory. For example, in physical education, although there is satisfactory planning to include students with physical disabilities, there is an absence of planning to meet other varied needs. When all students are given the same task, a few students are unable to achieve the lesson objectives and higher attainers are insufficiently challenged.
38. Teachers' expectations are high in Years 7 to 9. For example, in a Year 8 music class the quality of teaching was very good with excellent levels of challenge that students rose to with enthusiasm. Students responded well to the high expectations of the teacher, and their behaviour and attitudes were very good. They showed interest and excitement in what they were learning. In Years 10 and 11 expectations are satisfactory. In vocational subjects, teachers demand a high quality of presentation. Students respond with a good level of productivity and as a result achieve better examination results than would be expected from their attainment when they joined the college. However, in art and design students have got used to a relaxed pace of learning in which there is insufficient challenge. In science, higher attainers and some groups of boys are

not being challenged sufficiently and results at GCSE are not as good as in many other subjects. Expectations of behaviour also vary. In modern languages for instance, teachers expect students to behave well, respond respectfully to both teachers and other students, and take a sensible part in discussion groups. In science, in a Year 10 class, students were slow to settle and became uninterested when the teaching did not inspire or challenge them. This resulted in the students showing disrespect for the teacher.

39. In Years 7 to 9, teachers use effective teaching methods. In the best lessons teachers enabled students to discover for themselves, using the students' own experiences to aid development of understanding. A good example was in a religious education lesson where students gathered evidence of 'joining' strategies in secular clubs and then related them to the membership of a church. In geography, teachers use very good teaching methods of a practical nature to involve students in their learning. Individual, partner and small group work is well linked to a variety of activities and tasks, which very successfully ensures all students are working at an appropriate level. In Years 10 and 11, teachers teaching methods are satisfactory. In a design and technology lesson producing a design specification for example, the overhead projector transparency was too small for the students to read so none completed the task. In another lesson, on developing rendering techniques, the teacher described the effect of light in causing degrees of shading rather than showing the students with a simple demonstration.
40. Teachers manage students well in Years 7 to 9. In physical education the management of students and organisation of lessons are often of a high order, which is reflected, in students' good standards of dress, high levels of participation and the effort and energy they put into lessons. In Years 10 and 11 the management of students is satisfactory. In art and design, in some lessons, there is a lack of warmth between the teacher and students that has an adverse impact on students' achievement. This is because some teachers have not developed the skill of managing students in a friendly and supportive way. As a result, challenges to teachers' authority are frequent.
41. The quality of marking is satisfactory. In vocational subjects all students benefit from thorough, evaluative marking of their work which clearly shows students where they are going wrong and what they need to do to improve their writing and extend their knowledge. In other subjects, marking can be a little too congratulatory or rely too heavily on ticks with no explanations. The result of this is that, while teachers have a good idea of how the students are progressing, the students themselves have only a broadly average understanding of how well they are doing.
42. The use of homework is satisfactory. Homework is used appropriately across the college. The main concern of parents is that there is too much variation in the amount of homework set. The inspectors agree that there is some variation in the amount set each week, which leads to some students being overloaded whilst other students have very little homework to do some evenings.
43. The quality of teaching in the modern languages department has improved since the last inspection. A wide range of interesting teaching methods have been adopted and the additional funding that Language College status has brought has enabled teachers to experiment with and develop the use of information and communication technology. This was seen to very good effect

in a Year 7 German lesson when the teacher gave a 'masterclass' in the techniques of using new technologies to improve students' learning. In this situation the students responded with tremendous enthusiasm and the lesson carried on long into the lunch break. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory across the curriculum. In English, teachers get pupils to draft and re-draft their work using information and communications technology. In a Year 10 science lesson, the teacher used the 'paint' software to good effect when explaining the effect of a lens on rays of light. However, in geography the use of computers is planned and the time used effectively within the curriculum, but limitations of access to computers limit some investigative elements especially in Year 10.

44. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good and they make good progress. Teachers know their students well and generally provide work that is challenging and at an appropriate level. However, it is not consistently good across all teachers and all subjects. There is very good practice in some departments, such as mathematics and English, in extending the college's individual education plans into subject specific targets that enable a greater focus on students' individual needs in these subjects. This leads to very good progress. These examples of very good practice need to be extended to cover all the areas of work in the college. There is effective teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants in planning lessons, so support assistants are well prepared for lessons.
45. Students for whom English is an additional language mostly make good progress in the college. Other students, as well as teachers, show a willingness to help them. A minority of students were finding some difficulty in following lessons and were receiving less additional support than might be expected.

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

46. Despite some significant strengths, the curriculum is unsatisfactory as it fails to meet statutory requirements.
47. The quality and range of opportunities in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Providing drama lessons for all students in Year 7 enhances the basic curriculum and all can study two languages. There is, however, too great an emphasis on drawing and painting in art and design to the detriment of work in three dimensions. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very broad and there is a wide range of options to meet the varying needs of different groups of students. There is for example, a wide range of GCSE subjects, which together with the core provision that includes a half GCSE in religious education means that the highest attainers can study for up to ten and a half GCSEs. Some students seek a change from a totally academic curriculum and they can opt for a course in outdoor education as a contrast to examination studies. This course is very popular for a range of reasons. Lower attaining students find that they can achieve well on the course and those with low self-esteem or behavioural problems make considerable progress in their social skills. There are several vocational courses that can be combined with GCSEs to provide a wide combination of different types of experience for the students. Those students who are particularly gifted or talented are provided with a particularly good curriculum. They can, for example, study mathematics and foreign languages to AS level and there is a club specifically devoted to carrying out mind stretching activities. Despite these

particular strengths the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 fails to meet statutory requirements. Many students do not study design and technology and underachieve as a result. Lessons in physical education are based totally on games, which is too restricted to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

48. The curriculum has been significantly enhanced through the specialist Language College status. A wide range of language based courses are now available to students and also to the local community, through the Adult Education programme. Students study for two modern foreign languages from Year 8, the main languages being French and German, whilst Italian, Russian and Spanish are offered on a rotational basis.
49. The two-week timetable provides a good degree of flexibility and helps ensure that all students have equal access to the curriculum, although the final ten minutes of the day, when students return to their form rooms, are often wasted. The students who are blind, deaf or physically disabled have a very good equality of access to the curriculum, mainly because of the college's excellent policy of inclusion and the support provided by learning support assistants. The college has a good strategy for improving students' literacy skills. A target group of subjects has been established to implement strategies aimed at improving reading and writing. Teachers in other subjects have clear guidance on how literacy skills can be improved and, for the most part, these are implemented. There is, as yet, no such strategy for improving numeracy but the situation is still satisfactory as several subjects already develop these skills in their everyday lessons.
50. The planning of the curriculum is helped considerably by the very good arrangements that the college makes for taking account of the work covered in the primary schools as a result of the very good relationships that exist with other schools. Being a specialist Language College has enabled teachers from Cheadle Hulme to work successfully with other schools and a particular strength is the way that teachers from the college work with primary schools. Links in foreign languages are particularly successful in ensuring that students get off to a flying start at the college. Teachers from primary schools visit to work with mathematics teachers at the college. The science department runs a project that starts in the primary schools and continues into Year 7. The flow of information about students with special educational needs is very effective in ensuring that the college can plan a provision that meets the needs of individual. The links with other secondary schools and colleges of further education are very effective in providing a curriculum that meets the needs of a small group of students who are in danger of becoming disaffected. By joining with other schools, the college has been able to purchase places for students on such courses as floristry and motor vehicle maintenance, which are appropriate for individual students.
51. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good. Where students are not studying all National Curriculum subjects, the alternative provision is good and meets the need of the individual students well. Provision for students with physical disabilities is good. They all make a full and active contribution to the life of the college. An excellent inclusion philosophy enables them to have full access to the curriculum, except for the few who are disappplied due to the severity of their disability.

52. The arrangements for teaching personal, social and health education are unsatisfactory. The work that is planned includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness and these plans provide a satisfactory experience for the students. However, students in Year 10 do not receive any lessons in personal, social and health education at all. Careers education is of good quality. All students have two weeks work experience and the option to choose from a wide vocational curriculum.
53. The college has good links with the local community. One of the most successful of these links is in foreign languages where a significant number of evening classes are held. Musicians from the college frequently take part in local events, but in terms of links developed by subjects this tends to be the exception rather than the rule.
54. The college provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. The provision in music is good. There is also good provision for sports, which is popular with students. Around a third of all students take part in extra-curricular sporting activities that are organised by eight members of staff. The academic curriculum is enhanced through, for example, the catch-up clubs which help students make up work missed through absence or who have fallen behind with their work.
55. The curriculum is of a similar standard to that at the time of the previous inspection. The weaknesses in religious education and information and communication technology have been dealt with successfully, but problems with design and technology remain and the curriculum in physical education no longer meets statutory requirements.
56. The provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory and the provision for moral, social and cultural development is good. There has been no audit of this provision however and the college does not have a policy to guide teachers.
57. The provision for the spiritual development is satisfactory. In religious education lessons teachers recognise opportunities for reflection and wonder, and a very good example was observed in a Year 10 class who were struck by the wonder of an unborn child. In geography students shut their eyes to re-create experiences and feelings of being involved in an earthquake. The support given to students after the deaths of students in 2000 and 2001 was invaluable, and the lunchtime Christian Club, 'Pog,' provides a good opportunity for students to talk about issues of faith. However, although there is a college Chaplain, prayer meetings are available for staff only and few assemblies contain explicit acts of worship. As such they do not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of worship. The college has developed a 'thought for the day', but the quality of delivery is dependent upon the teacher and opportunities for reflection on it are not consistent.
58. The provision for the moral development of students is good. In science students consider ethical issues surrounding genetic engineering and there is discussion of environmental issues such as energy conservation. In religious education students in Years 10 and 11 consider the nature of good and evil, and reflect on the moral issues of abortion, euthanasia, prejudice and war. Their study of the Holocaust brings them face to face with the results of the breakdown of the moral code. In personal, social and health education students receive advice on such topics as drug and alcohol abuse, the law and relationships, including sexually transmitted diseases. The college nurse and

the drugs advisory service's 'drop in centre' that are available weekly in college provide valuable support for students.

59. The opportunities for the social development of students are good. The inclusive nature of the college is a valuable asset for all the students and students of all physical abilities work together, enriching their college experience. The ability of a profoundly deaf student to conduct the orchestra in music provided a learning experience for students and adults. The college supports a range of music groups that encourage co-operation and older students take the lead in organising some of these groups. The outdoor education programme for Years 10 and 11 is an enriching, social experience that develops students' confidence and self-reliance. The range of visits organised by the modern foreign languages department include visits to Russia, France, German, Italy and Spain. Within many departments the emphasis on paired and group work enables students to learn from each other and to develop their social skills. Although there are some opportunities for students to demonstrate responsibility and initiative, such as in the work of the librarians, these are insufficient for the majority of students to experience them.
60. The provision for the cultural development of students is good. Students visit art galleries in Liverpool, Stockport and London, while students studying drama attend performances in Manchester. The range of visits organised by the modern foreign languages and business studies departments extend to Russia, France, America and Spain are to be extended to include Italy. The 'International week' organised in college involved the work of many departments and the letters and e-mail correspondence on display are testament to the truly international nature of the week. In food technology students investigate the food of a wide variety of countries, and music and art and design reflect different cultures in their work. In geography, religious education and history students have the opportunity to study the cultures of a range of countries. Around the college, however there are few images that reflect the cultural diversity of Britain today and few opportunities for students to appreciate the richness of multi-cultural Britain.

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

61. The college has satisfactory procedures for promoting students' welfare and supporting their educational progress. The quality of personal support and guidance is good. The standard of care that students' receive enhances their personal and academic progress.
62. There are effective procedures for child protection that comply with national and local requirements. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory overall. They have some strengths. Provision for medical care and first aid is good, and equipment is checked regularly in accordance with statutory requirements. There is a comprehensive programme of risk assessment, but this still has to be completed. Some work has been carried out, as is the case with the outdoor education programme, which has been thoroughly assessed. The physical

education department, on the other hand, has yet to complete risk assessments of its activities.

63. Students' personal development is well supported and monitored. It starts with effective arrangements for the induction of Year 7 into the college. As a result new students quickly settle into college routines and make good progress. The pastoral structure of form tutors and key stage co-ordinators provides all age groups with good individual help and guidance. Members of staff who have responsibility for pastoral care monitor and support students' welfare effectively. They do this well on an informal basis through their good personal knowledge of individuals. There are also effective formal systems. Tutors and key stage co-ordinators monitor students closely via records of merits earned, detentions and referrals for poor behaviour. A programme of one-to-one interviews between tutors and students provides good personal support and guidance. The tutorial system has some weaknesses. The tutor period at the end of the college day is ineffective. Many students regard it as a waste of time. They do not see it as an opportunity to discuss matters of concern. Some of these students are also reluctant to turn to their tutors when they experience personal difficulties. However, they have good access to alternative sources of advice, and the range of choice that is available to them is a strength of the college's pastoral system. Students who need guidance can obtain it from key stage co-ordinators, members of the senior management team and the college nurse, who runs regular 'drop-in' clinics. The 'Making it Back' counselling service provides an additional source of support for those who struggle to deal with serious problems such as drugs abuse. It promotes inclusion by helping to keep in college students who would otherwise be in danger of dropping out of education altogether.
64. The college's programme of personal, social and health education adequately promotes the welfare and development of students in Years 7 to 9 and Year 11. Currently, it is not being taught in Year 10, and is therefore unsatisfactory overall. Some students feel that it is a waste of time, although they say that some of the careers education units are useful. They particularly enjoy careers guidance programme 'The Real Game'. The quality of careers education and guidance in general is good. Students get effective advice on selecting appropriate GCSE and vocational courses. Those who are now in Years 10 and 11 say that they are happy with the choices that they made. They believe that they received good guidance when they decided on their options in Year 9. The college also prepares its students well for the next stage of education and the world of work. It makes good provision for work experience and ensures that Year 11 have good access to information on courses at local colleges and sixth forms.
65. The college has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Registrations comply with legal requirements. The computerised system provides accurate information on the attendance of individuals and groups of students. Members of staff use it effectively to monitor attendance rates. They identify students who are away without good reason, or frequently absent, and take appropriate remedial action. Pastoral staff work closely with the education welfare officer on measures to improve the attendance of students and prevent their learning from being impaired by prolonged absence.
66. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. The college's expectations are clearly expressed in its code of conduct and are supported by a sound system of rewards and sanctions. As a result students understand the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, know what will happen if they cross them, and have incentives to behave well and work hard. Members of staff use sanctions and rewards with reasonable consistency and in a way which students regard as fair. Exclusion is only applied as a last result to deal with cases of serious misconduct. Wherever possible the college uses extraction from lessons as an alternative. The sanction is successful in preventing disruption to lessons but does not cure the poor behaviour of a hard core of difficult students. This is evident from the number of names that appear more than once in the extraction room records.
67. Measures to prevent aggressive and unruly behaviour are satisfactory. The college has a formal anti-bullying policy and through its programme of personal and social education encourages students to be open about the issue. It has rearranged the lunch hour so that Years 7 to 8 and Years 9 to 11 take their lunch breaks at different times. This helps members of staff to

supervise students and reduces opportunities for bullying. The college's arrangements are not wholly effective. The undisciplined behaviour by a small minority observed during the last inspection still occurs because there are no firm rules on movement around the college, and levels of supervision remain relatively low. As a result, students who are boisterous and noisy in the corridors are not consistently and promptly brought to order.

68. The college's arrangements for identifying students with special educational needs has due regard to the procedures recommended in the Code of Practice. For all students with statements, assessment, recording and reporting all meet statutory requirements and the college implements the provision outlined in the statement. The college cares well for students known to need particular attention. It caters very well for those students with physical disabilities and works very closely with all outside agencies.
69. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The college has put in place a number of schemes to deal with unsatisfactory behaviour out of class although further action is needed. It continues to provide effective support and guidance for its students.
70. The college's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The use that the college makes of information to guide curriculum planning and to monitor students' academic progress is satisfactory.
71. Good systems are established to provide information about each student's standard of attainment and potential for future achievement. The college collects and records a substantial amount of data on its students when they enter the college, including National Curriculum test results at the age of 11 and data about students' standards from the local education authority. Information is shared with the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and provides information about the placing of students into classes based on their potential attainment. As students progress through the college, further data is collected, shared with head of departments and informs about the progress students make and standards attained. Some subjects record information of students' National Curriculum levels as they progress from Year 7 to Year 9, but this is not developed in all subjects. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum assessments and other standardised test results are used to assess each student's GCSE potential and to provide information about subject choices at the start of Year 10.
72. Between Years 9 and 11 information is used to identify each student's level of attainment in all subjects and identify their potential GCSE level. Heads of department monitor progress against the standards achieved and predicted grades. The college analyses its GCSE results fully and provides detailed information about how well subjects and individual students achieve, but it does not give clear direction or rigorously monitor how well subjects respond to information and the progress individual students make. Data is used well in subjects such English, mathematics and modern foreign languages but is unsatisfactory in science and art and design. There is no system for the involvement of students in the regular assessment of progress, but there is opportunity for all students to discuss progress with teachers in an annual review. The college monitors attainment and progress of students by gender, but not by ethnic group, but teachers are well aware of the progress made by each individual student. The requirements of students with special educational needs are good. There is regular exchange of information between the special educational need co-ordinator and this is used well to monitor progress and review targets.

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

73. There is a satisfactory partnership between home and college, and the contribution that parents make to their children's learning raises standards of attainment.
74. Less than ten per cent of parents completed the inspection's survey of parental opinion, and only a small number attended the meeting with the registered inspector. Overall, those who responded said that they were satisfied with the

college and their involvement with it. For example, there was praise for the prompt way in which the college deals with parental concerns. The vast majority of parents who answered the questionnaire believes that the quality of teaching is good and that children make good progress. The replies also say that the college encourages students to become more mature and responsible. On the other hand, a significant minority is unhappy with information on students' progress, the extent to which the college works in co-operation with parents, and the amount of work that children are expected to do at home. The inspection supports the majority view. It finds that information for parents is satisfactory overall, and that teachers make adequate use of homework. However, it also accepts that there are some grounds for the concerns of parents who are not happy with these aspects.

75. Information for parents is satisfactory overall. The prospectus and annual report of the governing body are well presented and meet statutory requirements, with the exception of the sections on provision for students with special educational needs. These make no reference to the college's special educational needs co-ordinator or the governor with responsibility for special educational needs. The quality of information on the curriculum is good. In addition to the prospectus the college provides booklets for the parents of students in Years 7 to 9. These give very full accounts of the topics that will be studied during the course of the year.
76. The quality of information on students' progress is satisfactory but variable. There are weaknesses in the written reports that are sent to parents at the end of the academic year. Subject departments exercise their discretion as to how they report on attainment and progress, and as a result there are considerable differences in style and content. Some reports include National Curriculum levels, with explanations of what they mean, as in the case of reports on physical education. Others make no mention of national norms. Many reports are vague and bland and tell parents little about their children's knowledge and understanding of the subject. For instance, in mathematics, reports focus almost exclusively on students' attitudes to learning and application to task. Their texts could apply with equal validity to any other National Curriculum subject. None of the subject reports contain specific targets for improvement or precise advice on how to raise attainment. Instead, lower attainers are told to concentrate more in lessons, while higher attainers are told to keep working well. Reports do not help parents to support their children's learning, and there is therefore some justification in the complaints about information on progress and home/college links. However, the weaknesses in the annual written reports are balanced by strengths elsewhere. There are good arrangements for consultation evenings, and the student journal, when properly used, is a very effective line of communication between college and home. As it includes test results and the results of 'student review days' as well as details of homework, it regularly updates parents on their children's progress and on targets for improvement. Most journals are used effectively, but some students and parents say that they are not checked each week by form tutors.
77. Parents of students with special educational needs are valued and encouraged to support their child's learning. Partnership with parents is integral to the ethos of the college.
78. The college makes satisfactory arrangements to encourage parents to promote their children's learning. It has put in place a home/college partnership agreement in which parents undertake to support the college over matters such as attendance, behaviour and homework. The agreement is helpful in persuading parents to uphold the system of discipline, for example by giving their consent to detentions. Good informal links between college and home encourage parents to support their children's education. Members of staff are prompt in contacting home if there are problems. They are approachable and willing to listen to parents' views. Parents value

this “open door” policy and respond by getting in touch with the college if they have concerns over their child’s progress.

79. Parents have high aspirations and are keen for their children to succeed. The level of parental involvement with learning is therefore high, and this enhances students’ attainment and progress. Nearly all parents attend consultation evenings and read and sign the student journals. They are very interested in the work that their children do at home. As the questionnaire shows, they are anxious that teachers should set homework regularly, and provide a sufficient amount of it. The vast majority of parents co-operate with the college if there are difficulties with attendance, attitudes or behaviour. They attend meetings with members of staff and work with them to find solutions. Parental support for the college also enhances students’ opportunities for learning. For example, parents make financial contributions towards the cost of trips and extra-curricular activities. They also provide extra financial resources through covenants and through the fund raising activities of the parent teacher association. Although the organising committee is small, the association’s events attract support from a much greater number of parents.
80. The college has made satisfactory progress in these areas since the previous inspection.

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

81. The quality of leadership and management of the college is good. The headteacher is providing good leadership. There is a clear sense of direction and a purposeful atmosphere in which all students are encouraged to give of their best. An excellent inclusion philosophy permeates the college. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have been instrumental in bringing about both specialist Language College status and Training School status, a rare achievement indeed and one of which the college is justly proud. The result of this inclusive approach and the new initiatives can be seen in the students’ good attitudes, the college’s rich provision for foreign languages and the most recent set of GCSE examination results.
82. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is well supported by a well-informed and experienced senior management team. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. New systems and structures have been introduced that provide a good framework for the work of the college. The introduction of key stage co-ordinators has strengthened the pastoral system. Each member of the senior management team has a specific responsibility. The team is effective in moving the college forward. However, the monitoring of the implementation of college policies is not rigorous enough and has resulted in inconsistent practice occurring within subjects. Teaching is not always monitored as systematically as it should be and this has resulted in unsatisfactory teaching in art and design going unchecked.
83. The college has been successfully steered through a number of major initiatives since the last inspection. The college was successful in obtaining specialist Language College status, the impact of which is wide ranging. The college has made very good use of specific grants associated with this specialist status. Results in modern foreign languages have risen steadily from the already good levels at the last inspection. The additional facilities have been used effectively across the college to the benefit of all students. The college now has a significant number of students with wide ranging physical disabilities. The college has worked hard to ensure that these students are integrated fully into the life of the college. The college has also become a designated Training School and the benefits can be seen in the development of staff.
84. The college’s aims are relevant to the needs of the students and permeate much of the work of the college.
85. The leadership and management provided by many middle managers are good. The college has made many good appointments. There are examples of outstanding leadership and management at this level. For instance, the management of modern foreign languages since the last inspection has been very good and continues to be so under the leadership of the

current head of department. The result of which has led to an improvement in the standards attained by students. However, the monitoring of the work of subjects is not sufficiently rigorous. This has resulted in the wealth of data that the college has not being used consistently across all subjects to set targets or identify weaknesses. The leadership and management of art and design are poor. This is because there has been a period of uncertainty following the long-term illness of the head of department. The other teachers in the department have not had strong leadership and there is a lack of suitable challenge or excitement in some classes. As a result, students are too relaxed in their approach, producing work that is often neat but lacks originality or creativity.

86. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator ensures clear educational direction and is aware of the need to promote high standards. The co-ordinator is also aware of the need for rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. Liaison with outside agencies is good. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection when this aspect of the college's work was a concern.
87. The governors have a very good understanding of the college's work and they have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. The governing body is effective and has established close links with the college. This has enabled governors to gain expertise and an understanding of the work of the college, and a good insight into the college's strengths. The committee structure is effective in supporting both short-term and long-term planning, and scrutinising the work of the college and the standards being attained.
88. The governing body does not fulfil its statutory duty in ensuring that the National Curriculum entitlement for all students in design and technology and physical education in Years 10 and 11 is provided and the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. The college prospectus and annual report of the governing body make no reference to the college's special educational needs co-ordinator or the governor with responsibility for special educational needs.
89. At the last inspection, the college's development plan was criticised. A new system and cycle of college development planning has been introduced and this has resulted in a college development plan that is of good quality, focuses on raising attainment and sets a clear agenda for improvement. The college's priorities are appropriate and many of the issues noted in this report are highlighted in the college development plan.
90. The college applies the principles of best value well and continues the good work noted in the previous report. The headteacher and the governing body have set challenging targets for improvement particularly for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A\* to G. The most recent set of results indicate that the college has been successful in meeting these targets. The college compares its performance with similar attaining colleges in the authority and nationally. External bureaucracy does not unduly affect the college.
91. The college makes good use of new technology. A system of registering students' attendance electronically has been introduced and enables the college to make early contact with parents if problems with truancy occur.
92. The financial planning in the college is very good and the college makes very good use of its available resources and specific grants. The college has clearly defined systems for tendering and ordering. The last Auditor's report noted few minor areas for improvement and these have been implemented. The college receives a budget that is above the national average although this does include a significant amount of funding for being a specialist Language College and a Training School. A tight rein is kept on spending by the administrative staff and the senior management team. Through careful and prudent management of the

budget, the college has a satisfactory level of reserves. The college is providing good value for money.

93. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The college has a core of teachers with many years of experience. There is a good number of learning support assistants to meet the needs of students with learning and physical difficulties who give very good support to both students and teachers, for example, through the preparation of Braille worksheets. Teachers receive good support from technical staff. The administrative staff ensures the day-to-day efficient smooth running of the college. The contribution of all these support services is highly valued and contributes to the effectiveness of the college.
94. The college status as a designated Training School enables a continuity to exist between Initial Teacher Training, induction of Newly qualified Teachers and Continuing Professional Development. The college has excellent links with the Manchester Metropolitan University and other external training providers; these links ensure the ongoing professional development for initial teacher training (ITT), newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and experienced teachers seeking continuous professional development (CPD). The college's central programme of professional development at present focuses on teaching and learning. Professional development is good. It is very good in modern foreign languages and has a significant impact on raising standards in this area of the curriculum. There has been very good progress in the procedures for professional development since the last inspection.
95. The college operates a very good induction programme for both new staff and newly qualified teachers. Experienced teachers, new to the college, follow some aspects of this programme, which enables them to settle quickly into the life of the college. The college invests very well in training; it has for the second time gained the Investors In People award. However, there is a need to ensure the work of the newly qualified teachers is monitored more closely by heads of department.
96. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. There are wide differences in the quality of the accommodation in different parts of the college. The library, languages area and science laboratories, for example, have been extensively re-furnished and provide attractive and up to date facilities for staff and students. In contrast, the college's changing rooms and the multi-gym area are in very poor condition. The accommodation for physically impaired students also shows a wide range of quality. For example, there is a very good medical centre in the college and some good stair lifts to improve access. This is contrasted by some very steep ramps and restricted access to changing rooms. There are insufficient rooms for food technology and as a consequence work is of a slightly lower standard than in other areas of technology because there are too many groups for the rooms available, which means that lessons have to be taught out of sequence so that students are designing products after they make them.
97. Overall, the adequacy of learning resources is satisfactory; the provision made gives sound support for the whole curriculum. Subject areas are well resourced; for example, in history, religious education and design and technology there is a wide range of equipment. The provision in modern foreign languages is very good and the introduction of interactive white boards and information and communication technology is having a very positive effect on the

quality of teaching and the standards that students attain in this area. Financial investment, particularly through the Language College funding, has enabled the purchase of new computers; the ratio of students to computers is 7:1, which is broadly average. The level of book stock is below national recommendations; however, the books that were seldom used have been removed and good use is made of the external library service.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

Improve the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 to the best seen in Years 7 to 9 by ensuring monitoring systems are more systematic and the application of college policies is more consistent. (para 14, 30, 37, 38, 40, 72, 76, 82, 85, 106, 131, 152, 171, 189 and 206)

Improve the achievement of students in art and design by improving the quality of teaching by:

- Ensuring work is more challenging and exciting;
- Improving the quality of management;
- Ensuring there is agreement about what needs to happen to improve standards. (para 14, 16, 31, 18, 32, 85, 134, 136, 137, 138, 139).

Improve the achievement of students, and in particular that of the boys, in science to that seen in English and mathematics by:

- Improving the quality of teaching in order to improve students' learning, and their enjoyment of science.
- Considering how students will learn when planning lessons. (para 14, 16, 18, 32, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128)

Improve the achievement of students in design and technology by ensuring that all students in Years 10 and 11 receive their full National Curriculum entitlement for design and technology. (para 16, 47, 143 and 145).

### **Minor weaknesses**

Ensure that students in Years 10 and 11 have their full National Curriculum entitlement for physical education. (para 47).

The governing body does not fulfil all its statutory duties. (para 88).

The written reports to parents are too vague. (para 76).

\*The personal, social and health education programme is unsatisfactory because it is not taught in Year 10. (para 64).

\*Indicates that this is already noted in the college's development plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	162
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	67

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	37	52	46	13	0	0
Percentage	6	23	33	30	8	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	1351
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	155

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	40
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	274

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	62

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	137	139

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	101	90
	Girls	108	104	93
	Total	192	205	183
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	69(80)	74(72)	66(67)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32(47)	54(56)	34(33)
	National	32(28)	43(42)	34(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	104	93
	Girls	110	113	104
	Total	193	217	197
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	70(77)	78(75)	72(67)
	National	65 (64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36(45)	58(54)	40(39)
	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	122	145	267

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	63	118	119
	Girls	93	137	140
	Total	156	255	259
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	59(55)	96(88)	97(93)
	National	47.2(47.4)	88.9(90.6)	94.6(95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	41.6 (37)
	National	38.1 (38.7)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a
	National	N/a

### Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	9
Pakistani	21
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	19
White	1280
Any other minority ethnic group	14

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	82.2
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.4

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	450

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	22.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### 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	2	0
Chinese	0	0
White	77	5
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

### Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	3580862
Total expenditure	3550520
Expenditure per student	2614
Balance brought forward from previous year	53252
Balance carried forward to next year	83594

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1351
Number of questionnaires returned	92

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	58	12	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	37	50	12	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	49	14	5	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	50	25	13	1
The teaching is good.	22	65	4	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	50	21	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	46	7	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	50	5	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	48	24	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	29	49	7	3	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	51	11	0	12
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	35	13	7	25

### Other issues raised by parents

The higher attainers are not being challenged fully.  
Standards in science and languages are not high enough.

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Students consistently obtain results that are well above the national average in their GCSEs.
- The achievement of all students in the college is good.
- At its best, the teaching is of very high quality and results in students making rapid progress.
- Assessment information is well used to ensure that all students are taught a curriculum that is right for them.

#### Areas for improvement

- A small proportion of the teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is not being monitored so as to share best practice and eliminate unsatisfactory practice.

99. Results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were above the national average for all schools and were also above the average for schools taking students from similar backgrounds. Results obtained in English were close to those in mathematics and better than those in science. The attainment of girls was broadly similar to that of boys. Results overall have improved since 1997, though there has been some fluctuation from year to year according to the differing prior attainment of the year groups.

100. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations in both English and English literature were both well above the national average. As the college entered an eighth more of the Year 11 cohort than is entered nationally, results in English literature were all the more creditable. Boys and girls achieved equally well and the students do as well in English as they do in most of their other subjects. They achieve better in English literature than in most of their other subjects. Results have remained consistently high over the last four years.

101. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that examination results accurately reflect the standards being currently attained in the college. The standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average and well above average by the end of Year 11. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 is good. The achievement of students with special educational needs, and those for whom English is a second language, is in line with that of other students. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

102. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is good at all levels in the college. Students take part in a range of whole class, paired and group discussions. They understand the basis upon which they are assessed and are willing to work together to improve their own skills and those of others. Higher

attainers possess good vocabularies and many are able to discuss literary topics using appropriate technical terms. This was seen, for example, when Year 11 students discussed how William Golding created a sense of declining moral standards in "Lord of the Flies". Middle attaining students tend to express themselves briefly but clearly. Lower attainers lack confidence when addressing the whole class but can usually communicate satisfactorily on a one to one basis. Most students listen attentively.

103. Students' attainment in reading is good. By the end of Year 9 students read a range of fiction and non-fiction that is appropriate for their age group. Higher and middle attaining students read aloud with fluency and clarity but only a minority reads aloud with the quality of expression, including the capacity to project their voices, that might be expected. Lower attainers are hesitant and lack confidence. Students at all levels develop particularly good skills in being able to decide the audience for which a particular piece of work was written. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, higher attaining students were able to successfully analyse the effects of emotive language, as used in a newspaper article. In a Year 7 class, lower attaining students were able to analyse some features of a piece of explanatory writing and to identify the main words and ideas that linked paragraphs. By the end of Year 11 students go on to study more complex texts. For example, good quality work by higher and middle attaining students in Year 11 was seen on aspects of Shakespeare's technique in creating character in "Macbeth". Additionally, lower attaining students in Year 10 lesson demonstrated that they understood the main ideas in Vernon Scannel's "Autobiographical Note", and were able to identify examples of assonance and the colloquial use of language in the poem. Students are encouraged to read widely and many do so, as was seen in a Year 11 class when students reviewed books and recommended them to other students.
104. Students' attainment in writing is good. By the end of year 9 students are familiar with different types of writing, including description, narrative and poetry. They also know how to write for practical purposes, including writing reports, giving explanations, giving instructions and writing different types of letters. Most students have developed the routine of re-drafting their work to improve it. By the end of Year 11 students consolidate their skills in assembling information carefully and correcting early drafts before presenting their best copy for assessment. Higher attaining students produce good quality work analysing literature. Middle attaining students demonstrate a sensitivity to language by writing in the style of an established author, as was seen in short stories written by Year 11 students in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe. Inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar mar the work of lower attainers.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Examples of excellent and very good lessons were also seen. A small proportion of lessons observed was unsatisfactory. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. Teachers possess very good knowledge of their subject and are well aware of the requirements of the courses they are teaching. This means they are able to communicate to students what they need to do to achieve high standards and they teach in such a way that students are appropriately challenged. This was seen happening in many lessons in all year groups. In a Year 10 lesson on a monologue by Carol Ann Duffy, for example, the teacher used skilful questioning to lead students to a deeper understanding of the poem's complexities. In Years 7, 8 and 9 teachers introduced students to many aspects of the life and times of Shakespeare, which aroused their enthusiasm and led to them conducting their own research, which included using the Internet. Most teachers have high expectations: they expect students to work hard, achieve high standards and to behave well. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson on the moral development of characters in Harper Lee's "To

Kill a Mockingbird". The brisk pace of the lesson, the teacher's rigorous probing of student's thinking and her implicit insistence that all should make a full intellectual effort led to rapid progress and students behaving maturely. Resources are used well to deepen students' understanding. This was seen taking place in many lessons, and again across all age and ability groups, where the overhead projector was used to display a text and students could watch as the teacher annotated it in response to class discussion. This gave students the opportunity to have a picture of what an annotated text should look like, to learn how to select the important points from what others had to say and how to express themselves concisely. When the challenge of work is closely matched to students' prior attainment, as they are in the "catch-up" classes that are selected early on in Year 7, students make good progress. Information and communication technology is used effectively to motivate students, especially lower attaining students. When teachers create variety in lessons students are better able to sustain their concentration. Marking is mostly good and gives students guidance on how to improve their work. Relationships between students and teachers are good and this helps to create a good environment for learning.

106. When teaching is less effective or unsatisfactory, the teacher does not adequately take into account students' prior attainment, the pace of the lessons is slow, the work lacks variety and the teacher's discipline is ineffective. In such lessons students become bored, behave inappropriately and do not make progress.
107. The leadership and management of the department are good. There has been clear improvement since the last inspection. Assessment data is effectively used to determine what and how students will be taught. The large numbers of teachers work well together as a team. However, the monitoring of teaching is unsatisfactory because it does not ensure that all teachers share best practice and that unsatisfactory practice is eliminated.
108. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The high standards achieved at GCSE have been maintained and standards achieved by the end of Year 9 have improved from being in line with the national expectation to being above it. The monitoring and co-ordination of special needs has improved and is now good. Students write in a wider variety of styles than before. Opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills have increased. Teaching remains a major strength in the department. However, the monitoring of teaching still has not been dealt with.

#### **Literacy across the college**

109. Standards of literacy are above average. The strategies employed to teach literacy across the whole curriculum are good. The college's approach to literacy has been well co-ordinated and has involved, for example, an analysis of the different types of styles of writing that can be appropriately taught in various subjects. Some subjects, including English, history and geography have strategies in place, whilst others are yet to be more fully involved. There are, therefore, inconsistencies of practice.
110. Students' reading skills are good and are sufficiently well developed to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum, except for a small minority. Most notably in English and history, students are set many tasks which require

them to read extensively, to conduct their own research and generally to find pleasure in reading. Elsewhere other opportunities are provided but they tend to be more limited. In design and technology, opportunities are provided for students to undertake research by reading books, articles and Internet sites, but not all teachers of the subject provide these opportunities. In science, students are required to use textbooks to support their studies, but such requirements tend to be confined to higher attaining students. In religious education there is much reading of information sheets, with limited opportunities for students to read aloud.

111. Students' writing skills are good. In a number of subjects, students are provided with good opportunities to broaden and to improve their writing skills. Students are shown how to structure their writing to best effect and how to re-draft it so as to improve its quality. Particularly well-presented explanations were seen in history projects, for example, on the treatment of paupers in Wilmslow in the early nineteenth century. In geography, students are required to use a range of writing, including writing reports in the style of newspapers. Opportunities are provided for extended writing in a number of subjects, including English, history, science and modern foreign languages. Written evaluations in design technology are usually of good quality. However, opportunities are missed elsewhere. In art and design, for example, teachers do not provide good quality opportunities for writing because they do not successfully integrate a consideration of critical and contextual elements into practical studies. There is a lack of consistency over the extent to which teachers correct errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
112. Students for whom English is an additional language mostly make good progress in the college. Other students, as well as teachers, show a willingness to help them. A minority of students were finding some difficulty in following lessons and were receiving less additional support than might be expected.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- There is consistently good teaching. Teachers have high expectations of students and use very effective teaching methods.
- The high quality of leadership and management results in students attaining well above average standards.
- There is very good provision for students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a need to develop a whole college numeracy strategy.

113. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were above the national average for all schools. When compared to schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were well above average. The attainment of girls was broadly similar to that of boys. Results in mathematics were similar to those in English but above those in science. The results have improved steadily since the previous inspection and the proportions of students who achieved the higher levels have increased. Based on the figures for the last four years the trend in results was above the national trend.

114. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C was well above the national average. The girls achieved better results than the boys did but this was in accordance with prior attainment. The results in 2001 were significantly higher than those of the previous year. Students do as well in mathematics as they do in most of their other subjects. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improving trend greater than the national trend. A small group of students were entered for GCSE in Year 10 and all achieved grades A or A\*. These students are now studying for AS level in pure mathematics.

115. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents a good level of achievement for all students, whose levels of attainment were average in numeracy when they joined the college. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented also achieve well. The college has developed strategies to improve attainment and there has been an improvement in teaching and attainment in work seen. Gifted and talented students are entered for the exceptional paper in the National Curriculum tests and are supported through extra-curricular lessons. These students plot the graphs of quadratic functions; they then progress to plotting graphs of cubic and reciprocal functions. Middle attaining students have a good understanding of shapes, space and measures. They calculate the perimeter of circles and use this understanding to calculating the total perimeters of sectors. Younger students calculate the areas of squares and triangles but there is less rigour in writing in the units. The numeracy skills of the students with special educational needs are weak. However, their teacher uses very good questioning techniques and encouragement that enables them to clarify their thoughts and they use a range of mental methods of computation to recall multiplication facts.

116. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above average. This attainment represents a very good level of achievement for all students. Students

with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make very good progress. Small proportions of the higher attaining students are entered for GCSE early and study for GCE AS level in pure mathematics. These students solve both linear and quadratic inequalities and are able to sketch the graphs of the inequalities. They work very well together supporting each other. Other high attaining students understand how to generate random numbers so that different methods of sampling can take place when investigating characteristics. They understand how different methods of sampling and different sample sizes may affect the reliability of conclusions. Middle attaining students solve simultaneous equations both by elimination and graphically. While the lower attaining students solve simple linear equations. Middle attaining students confidently find the  $n$ th term of a sequence when the rule is linear, but do not progress to find the  $n$ th term when the sequence is quadratic. Students with special educational needs have a good understanding of place value and use this to multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals by 10, 100 and 1000. When answering questions in preparation for their GCSE examination, middle-attaining students develop a good understanding of the use of Pythagoras theorem and use it skilfully to solve problems.

117. Overall standards of presentation are good in mathematics and spellings are generally correct. Students set their work out clearly and are developing good skills in structuring answers. They confidently and coherently answer questions and contribute well in class discussions.
118. Students with special educational needs make progress broadly in line with the rest of the students. They receive a very good level of support from learning support assistants who work well with their teachers so that students are integrated well in the lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts. Teachers encourage students with special educational needs to participate fully in lessons and they involve them well.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and there are examples of very good and excellent teaching at both key stages. The consistently good teaching and learning leads to very good achievement overall and is a major factor in raising standards. Learning is good because of the students' complete involvement in the majority of lessons and the good quality of questioning and interventions. Teachers continually ask questions like "How did you do that?". This encourages students to explain what they are doing and contributes well to the intellectual effort they make. This was evident in a lesson where higher attainers were solving algebraic inequalities. By the end of the lesson the students were able to solve inequalities where the sign changed and could represent them on a number line. Underpinning all of this are the teachers' enthusiasm for mathematics, good subject knowledge and high expectations. Teachers structure questions so that students have to think about applying skills they have learnt previously, and that the questions are at an appropriate level for the individual students. For example, in mental numeracy exercises for low attaining students, the teacher plans the questions well at a level sufficiently high to challenge students to think hard. Teachers plan their lessons well. There are clear learning objectives and effective structures to lessons so that students retain interest and motivation. Resources are planned and used effectively to enhance teaching. There is good use of overhead projectors in demonstrations. The majority of lessons progress at a brisk pace leading to a brisk pace of learning. The teacher ensured that the students had a good understanding of volume before they progressed to calculating the volume of parts of cylinders and were able to solve practical problems. In a minority of lessons the pace is slower, and then students tend to stray off task and waste time by chatting.
120. The management of students is generally good in all years and students respond accordingly. There is a positive atmosphere for learning in those classrooms, behaviour is good and students work well with each other. There are generally very good relationships in the classrooms both between students and students and teachers. Evidence of praise and support are very effective in raising confidence. This leads to an atmosphere of respect and a good understanding of the needs of students. Consequently students want to learn and this is an important contribution to raising standards. When carrying out work, students are encouraged to engage in discussions

and ask each other questions so they really understand their work. Students are involved in their own learning and this develops good personal skills. They demonstrate to other students, explaining their answers clearly and this contributes well their learning, consolidating their understanding. Students listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questions. However, in a minority of lessons students are not always fully concentrating when working on individual tasks and this impedes the overall learning for these students. Teachers work well with learning assistants to ensure that students with special educational needs make the best progress, which is in line with the rest of the year group. Homework is set regularly and supports the work students do in class very well. Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. It prepares students well for their next lesson.

121. The leadership and management of mathematics are very good and the capacity for improvement is very good. The staff work very well together and they are keen to raise achievement in mathematics. They are a very dedicated and committed team with enthusiastic leadership. Teachers regularly take part in professional development by investigating the most effective teaching methods. This contributes very well to the good level of teaching. They participate well in extra-curricular activities so that the students have the very best support for their learning. The basic mathematics curriculum is supported well by extended courses for students in all years. The college enters these students for the UK mathematics challenge and it is being extended to include the senior mathematics challenge intended for older students. Individual learning through the use of information and communication technology is used effectively to support lower attaining students. There are good procedures for assessing students' performance as they progress through the college. The performance of students is monitored well through regular testing and there are procedures in place to track students' attainment from these tests. The information from assessments is analysed and used effectively to set students according to ability. It ensures that the gifted and talented students are given the best opportunity to advance. There are good, stimulating displays around the college and in classrooms that encourage students to take a pride in their work and develop an interest in mathematics.

122. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The results for 14-year-olds and the GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection and there are continuing high standards. There has been an improvement in teaching. Teaching is now good with examples of very good and excellent teaching.

### **Numeracy across the college**

123. Most subjects in the college make a sound contribution to developing numeracy skills and there are definite plans to improve the co-ordination of numeracy across all curriculum areas. In science, there are opportunities for students to use their understanding of formulae in calculations and they plot line graphs of rates of chemical reaction. Their analysis of graphs is weak and the ability to predict the shape of the graph below expectations. In physical education, students take physical measurements of pulse and heartbeat and work out the target training zone. In outdoor education, they use their skills in measuring. Work in foreign modern languages contributes well to numeracy skills. Students use tables for results of a survey on likes and dislikes in order to compare them using bar graphs. Percentages are used well in geography to calculate the percentage growth of population. In design and technology, students measure accurately. They design packaging to support their work on batch production. They understand the concept of scale and use this effectively when producing working drawings.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**

### **Strengths**

- The accommodation has been refurbished and is of a very high standard.

- The laboratories are now situated in one area of the school, facilitating improved teamwork.
- There are examples of very good teaching.

#### Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching in order to improve students' learning, and their enjoyment of science.
- The monitoring of the work of the department, especially teaching and the application of policies.
- Overall standards in science so that they match those obtained in English and mathematics, especially the achievement of boys in Years 10 and 11.

124. When students enter the school, their standards in science are broadly in line with the national average. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were close to the national average. However, results are below those the students obtained in English and mathematics and most other subjects, and also below those obtained by students in similar schools. In the last three years, results have not improved at the same rate as national figures. There are no consistent differences in the results obtained by boys and girls at this level.

125. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were close to the national average. This was largely due to the girls' results being above the national figure, and balancing out the relatively poor performance by the boys. The improvement in girls' standards since they were in Year 9 is therefore good, but boys' achievements are unsatisfactory. The proportion of students gaining at least a GCSE grade G was above the national figure, but students do less well in science than they do in most of their other subjects. The trend in the proportion of students gaining at least a GCSE grade C has been downwards in the last three years, and is therefore no longer above the national average.

126. In work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain are broadly average by the end of Year 9 and reflect the results in national tests. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement overall. Work in students' exercise books shows wide variations; in particular, boys show less pride in their work than girls, and their learning suffers as a result. Moreover, there are wide variations in the standards which students attain with different teachers. Students in a Year 7 class showed a very mature approach to their work when observing onion skin under a microscope, and learn that plant tissue is made from cells. Another Year 7 group was less disciplined when setting up simple electrical circuits, in spite of the very good support provided by their teacher and the learning support assistant; the recording and analysis of their observations lacks care, and their learning suffers as a result. By Year 9, students analyse foods to ascertain whether they contain starch or protein; their approach to practical work is still eager, but more organised, particularly the recording of their observations. Lower attaining students use computers for research, and achieve well because the tasks set are at the correct level. Most students have satisfactory knowledge of the basic facts associated with topics they have studied recently.

127. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are average but show wide variations. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement although the girls do better than the boys. Higher attaining girls produce extensive pieces of writing when undertaking investigations, when they are required to describe what they did, and to analyse their results whilst the work of some boys lacks precision. Students know how to obtain high marks from examination questions; they worked in pairs to agree the correct answers, and learnt from one another by discussing how to gain full marks. A similar group of students, by contrast, learnt very little from a lesson about the solar system because they were

not provided with appropriate learning activities, and spent too much time simply listening to their teacher. In a Year 11 lesson on the impact of enzymes, students failed to understand the purpose of the investigation or the action of enzymes.

128. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Their targets are well known by their teachers, they are given sensitive support by the learning assistants, and often work well with other students. There are occasions when their learning suffers through a lack of concentration. Gifted and talented students achieve well in Year 9, but there is less consistency in Year 11 when teachers' expectations are too low.
129. Teaching and learning show wide variations in quality; overall they are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject, and where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because the teachers concerned fail to establish a good working relationship with students, or do not appear to understand how students learn. Most teachers appreciate the value of praise, and the management of students is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is less positive in Years 10 and 11; for instance, in a Year 10 lesson about the wiring of a plug, and the action of the fuse, learning was unsatisfactory because of the poor relationship between the teacher and students. As a result, the students did not listen carefully, or concentrate on their written work. Teachers' planning of work is mostly concerned with the topics to be covered, and pays insufficient attention to how students will learn. There are wide variations in their expectations of students' levels of concentration, and also in the depth of study. In a higher attaining Year 10 class, part of the lesson was devoted to students drawing a block graph to show the percentage of heat lost through different parts of a house, clearly a task with insufficient challenge, resulting in a general lack of interest. By contrast, a lower attaining group, also in Year 10, measured the rate of reaction between two chemical solutions, and were fully involved in their work since it was pitched at the correct level. In a significant proportion of lessons in Years 10 and 11, boys show less interest and pride in their work than girls. Liaison with the technicians is generally good, but there are occasions when learning is affected by a lack of appropriate equipment. The marking of students' work is also variable; in the best examples, teachers' comments are encouraging and give targets for improvement. Homework is set regularly, but often out of duty rather than as a natural extension to the learning in class; tasks are not always graduated in order to ensure success and challenge for all students.
130. The overall contribution made by the department to the teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Teachers develop students' literacy skills, for instance, by stressing and repeating key words in order to reinforce understanding. These key words are rarely displayed in laboratories. In a Year 8 lesson about controlling the spread of disease, students answered a series of questions by watching a good video recording; this consolidated their understanding, but answers were mainly one word, and there was no opportunity for students to use longer sentences to explain processes in their own words. There is no clear policy and an inconsistency in approach to the development of numeracy skills,

but students frequently take measurements during practical work, draw graphs, and use formulae for basic calculations. Students know the importance of including units in their answers, and also learn how to balance chemical equations. The department has made good progress in the integration of information and communication technology into the work of each year group, including research opportunities developed by teachers within the department. There is inconsistency in the frequency with which each teacher uses these opportunities.

131. Students' attitudes to their work are satisfactory overall. They vary according to the quality of teaching. Boys do not concentrate as well as girls, and consequently they do not follow instructions as accurately. Relationships between teachers and students are normally relaxed, but they are less secure in a number of average attaining groups in Years 10 and 11. Students in general co-operate well when working in groups in practical lessons. There is very good inclusion of students with special educational needs, as in the Year 9 lesson on food tests when a blind student worked closely with other students in recording the results of the tests.
132. Overall leadership and management of the science department are satisfactory. The organisation of the work of the department is good, and the head of department leads by example in her approach to teaching. There are clear schemes of work, a detailed departmental handbook, and appropriate priorities established in the development plan. However, there is too much inconsistency in practice across the department. The monitoring of teaching and marking, and of the level of compliance with school and department policies, has not been effective in raising standards. Insufficient time has been devoted to lesson observations, and to discussing strategies for improving students' learning. The monitoring of data is increasing and improving but does not yet relate students' achievements to the contribution made by individual teachers.
133. Since the last inspection, there has been a major improvement in the quality of the accommodation in science. The laboratories are now grouped in one area of the school, easing the work of the technicians, and encouraging teamwork and the sharing of good practice. The use of computers and target setting for students have also improved. There has been no improvement in teaching, however. A significant number of teachers show a lack of understanding about how to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, and in these lessons a sense of the fun and the magic of science is missing. As a result, standards in national tests in Year 9 and Year 11 have declined in comparison with national averages.
134. Overall, therefore, the progress made by the science department since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The quality of work on display is good.
- The quality of students' drawings is above average

### Areas for improvement

- Standards are below what they should be by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- By the end of Year 11 neither boys nor girls achieve as well as they do in their other subjects.
- The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. This is because some work fails to challenge or excite students and the atmosphere in lessons is often too relaxed.
- The management of the department is poor. There is insufficient agreement about what needs to happen to improve standards.
- Assessment is weak. Students are not always clear about what they have to do to improve their standards.
- There are some strained relationships between students and teachers.

135. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were close to the national average. This was the case for both boys and girls. Results have been broadly in line with the national average over the last three years. However, students do less well in art and design than in the other subjects they take at GCSE by quite a large margin, and this is a matter for concern. This is because the expectations of students are not ambitious enough, and so students do not reach the standards of which they are able.

136. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 are average, although their levels of achievement are unsatisfactory. This is because there has been a period of uncertainty following the long-term illness of the head of department. The other teachers in the department have not had strong leadership and there is a lack of suitable challenge or excitement in some classes. As a result, students are too relaxed in their approach, producing work that is often neat but lacks originality or creativeness. There is insufficient planning for the full range of abilities found in the mixed ability classes and, as a result, some higher attaining students do not reach the standards they are capable of. For instance, in two GCSE classes observed, there was no additional challenge for some potentially higher attaining students who produced predictable work that lacked visual excitement. Special educational needs students enjoy their lessons, although there is insufficient thought given to their special requirements. There is little difference between the achievement rates of boys and girls. Students' ability to use computer art and design applications is unsatisfactory because the department has only one computer between the three art and design rooms. Support for students' basic literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory because opportunities are lost to reinforce these basic skills.

137. By the end of Years 9, students successfully complete work using two-dimensional media. In one Year 8 class, for instance, students had produced still life drawings that showed good contrast in shading between the lighter and darker areas. This gave depth to the drawings and brought them to life. However, whilst these drawings were of good quality, these students had not had opportunities since they joined the college to do anything but painting and drawing, and so their art and design skills were narrow. In a similar lesson with a Year 9 class, students were making accurate drawings of toys, although the students became bored because they, also, had not been given a varied diet in lessons. Many of the students were off task and there was idle chatter that interfered with their work. Consequently, the quality of their work suffered. Students do not learn sufficiently about the work of well-known artists and so they do not use a sufficiently wide range of stimuli to help them improve.
138. By the end of Year 11, students have produced some neatly presented two and three-dimensional work. In one lesson seen, students were looking at shapes that represented letters of the alphabet in the work of well-known artists and were using these shapes in a design of their own. However, students were not aware of why they were doing this, and how this project would improve their art and design skills. As a result, students did not become fully absorbed with the project and produced work that was half-hearted. Students do individual research to provide useful background facts and ideas about practical project work. However, in one lesson seen, this work was done after the practical work had been completed and so failed to contribute the ideas needed to inspire the student. Homework is done regularly and usefully contributes to work done in class.
139. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in all years. The quality of students' learning follows suit and is also unsatisfactory. This is because students have got used to a relaxed pace of learning in which there is insufficient challenge. Teachers are confident in their own skills, but do not always communicate the finer aspects of the subjects in a way that drives up standards. Because students' curiosity is not always aroused, they produce work that lacks a sense of freshness or excitement. For instance, students are not often challenged to grapple with abstract or symbolic art forms and so tend to produce conventional designs that lack visual interest. In one Year 8 lesson, students had spent every week of the term completing a single still life pencil drawing. Whilst the results were of good quality, the students were becoming bored with the unvarying expectations placed on them. They chatted behind the teacher's back with many spending long periods of time off task. Teachers do not plan sufficiently for the full attainment range and so some students do not reach high enough standards. Teachers are not clear enough about what students have to do to improve. The quality of marking is inconsistent. In some lessons, there is a lack of warmth between the teacher and students that has an adverse impact on students' achievement. This is because some teachers have not developed the skill of managing students in a friendly and supportive way. As a result, challenges to teachers' authority are frequent.

140. The management of the subject is poor. This is partly due to the long-term absence of the head of department, which has resulted in a lack of forward movement, but also because development planning fails to identify features that will improve standards and because teachers do not evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the department with sufficient rigour. There has been a weak response to the issues from the last inspection; some work still lacks depth and is not well enough planned by students.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Students' practical skills are above average by the end of Year 11.
- Students' are good at carrying out research.
- Teachers give students plenty of opportunities to use information and communication technology.

### Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to practise answering examination questions.
- Many students are underachieving because they are not taught the subject in Years 10 and 11.

141. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were slightly above the national average. Results have continued to improve but girls performed better than boys did and students do as well in design and technology as they do in most of their other subjects. However, only around half of all students study the subject to GCSE level.

142. Students join the college with levels of attainment that are broadly average. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. There is little difference between the standards attained by boys and girls in Year 9. Practical skills are above average. Students weigh and measure accurately and carry out their tasks with a good degree of precision. They are already paying attention to the detail that will improve the appearance of their work, so that when making a pizza for example they wipe away excess puree and arrange their topping in a decorative way. Graphical skills are average but other aspects of presentation are below average. Written work is often poorly presented and poor spelling and punctuation mar the work of lower attaining students in particular. Work in food is of a slightly lower standard than in other areas because there are too many groups for the rooms available, which means that lessons have to be taught out of sequence so that students are designing products after they make them.

143. Those students who continue to study the subject to Year 11 achieve appropriately and attain standards that are broadly average. Practical skills are above average and some of the work on the graphics course is of a very high quality. Some of the models, for example, demonstrate a real flair for design and a great attention to detail. Much of the research that is carried out is also of a good quality. Students ask pertinent questions and then use the results of their analysis of the answers to decide upon colour schemes for restaurants or

flooring for hair salons for example. These lead to good standards of coursework, often very well presented because the students make excellent use of information and communication technology. However, the weakness in attainment lies in students' ability to explain their responses. For example, they can say what their theme for a bistro design will be, but not why they have chosen it. They do this verbally when given significant prompting by the teacher, but written responses lack this depth so students do not perform as well in examinations as they do in coursework. In general, girls do better than boys because they are more conscientious about their work and put more effort into their GCSE folders. Students measure accurately. They design box packages and develop net developments to support their work on batch production. They understand the concept of scale and use this effectively when producing working drawings.

144. Students who do not continue with their studies are not receiving their statutory entitlement and are underachieving.
145. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. One of the most significant strengths in the teaching is the way that information and communication technology is used to help lower attaining students to overcome their problems with handwriting and allow them to present their work in a neat way. Teachers use questioning well to make sure that all students are learning, but the questions usually only require a relatively short answer so that students do not deepen their understanding. Many of the aspects that prevent the teaching from being good are small points, but ones that have a significant impact on the lesson as a whole. In a lesson producing a design specification for example, the overhead projector transparency was too small for the students to read so none completed the task. In another lesson, on developing rendering techniques, the teacher described the effect of light in causing degrees of shading rather than showing the students with a simple demonstration. This meant that students learnt to render quickly, but had difficulty in understanding why different sides would have different shading effects. In Years 10 and 11, students need to be given more practice at answering examination questions so they develop the skills necessary to get the best results in the written papers. One significant strength in the teaching is the way that learning support assistants work with teachers to ensure that students with physical and other disabilities are able to take part in lessons and make the same progress as other students.
146. Poor progress has been made since the previous inspection. Students are still underachieving as a result of not receiving their entitlement to be taught the subject in Years 10 and 11, which was a key issue for the college at the time of the last inspection. The subject is managed appropriately on a day-to-day basis but the long-term development of the subject has been poor, despite the efforts of the head of department. The management of the subject, by the head of department is satisfactory but at a senior level the leadership and management have been poor. The only other real weakness is in the quality of reports to parents, which do not say enough about the progress that students have made, or what they can and cannot do.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average.
- Teaching is good and often very good.
- Students achieve well; as a consequence GCSE examination results are well above the national average.
- Literacy is good and is successfully developed through geography.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Limited access to information and communication technology constrains the investigative elements of the curriculum.
- The amount of fieldwork has declined over the last few years; students are receiving insufficient first hand experiences in order to underpin their work in the classroom.

147. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average with a significant proportion of students attaining the highest grades of A\*/A. Boys and girls achieved equally well and the students do as well in geography as they do in most of their other subjects. The results in GCSE examinations over the last four years show a good year-to-year improvement. All students entered in 2001 gained A\* to G grades.

148. In work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents a good level of achievement for these students, whose levels of attainment were average when they joined the college. In Year 7, most students, including lower attaining students and those for whom English is a second language, successfully master the basic skills of map work, scale and direction in relation to their immediate local vicinity. Students present their work effectively using appropriate titles, keys and sketch maps. In map work, they understand the significance of contours and four figure grid references; many use six figure references successfully; students' books show good evidence of this work. Year 8 students show a secure knowledge of permeable and impermeable rocks and the consequences of rainfall on different surfaces. They understand there may be other factors contributing to flooding, for example, global warming. They begin to understand the consequences of flooding for the inhabitants of southeast England during the 2000 floods; they successfully prioritise ways to limit the damage to property. By the end of Year 9, students show a good understanding of deforestation and start to understand different ways in which areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation and sustainability are successfully developed. Year 9 students show good knowledge about environmental issues, for example, global warming. Students effectively observe and compare the difference in agriculture between the 1940's and 1990's; many understand how farming technology has caused fields to be larger enabling effective use of large machinery. High attaining students understand the reason for greater diversification by farmers. Students successfully write a press article about the advantages and disadvantages of hedgerows in the countryside. Many students understand the concept of intensive farming, for instance, market gardening. High attaining students know the impact that genetically modified crops and organic crops have had on farming over the last few years. They successfully discuss issues related to the foot and mouth outbreak. Students in Year 9 use a range of methods to make their notes; most students make use of writing frames in order to structure their work; high attaining students produce good pieces of extended writing.

149. Students, for whom English is an additional language and those who have severe learning difficulties, use star and spider diagrams and, at times, simple writing frames to assist their learning. Students successfully draw graphs and bar charts to represent features like temperature, rainfall and traffic data. Both boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress

in map work, use of keys, scales and observational skills. Good behaviour and positive attitudes underpin the learning environment. All students successfully learn the basic skills of geography and achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

150. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 11 are well above average. Students achieve at a good level in relation to their work in Years 7 to 9, building on their earlier success. Both literacy and numeracy skills continue to successfully support the students' work in geography; literacy is good and well developed; numeracy is satisfactory. Students use pie charts successfully to plot data; students make good use of technical words and show a good range of writing. Year 10 students very successfully use visualisation techniques, which demonstrate students' good understanding about the aftermath of earthquakes. The techniques of visualisation gave good moments of quiet, which enabled a period of reflection. Students know that more economically developed countries, like Japan, are better prepared to constrain damage to buildings and limit human suffering than the less economically developed countries like India. High attaining students understand that some forms of technology can minimise and even prevent damage to buildings. Year 11 students understand about migration of populations from rural to urban areas in less economically developed countries. They show a good knowledge and understanding of the push and pull factors involved, for instance, the lack of amenities and jobs in rural areas compared with the towns. Students know how Manchester has developed from a number of towns to form a large conurbation. High attaining students show a good understanding about the massive displacement of population that took place and their re-location away from the centre of Manchester. By the end of Year 11 students' work shows a range of ways to present material; good use of annotated photographs and maps and the successful use of computers to enhance presentation. Concepts and the linking of different aspects of geography are well developed for the majority of students, for example, population growth. The scrutinised sample of work and work seen in lessons showed good achievement in relation to the students' prior attainment. All students, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers, classroom assistants and their peers.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years; there is also a small proportion of very good teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Overall, teachers show a very good knowledge of geography and apply this knowledge well to promote good learning. For instance, in Year 10, their very extensive knowledge of earthquakes successfully extends and stimulates the students' learning. Learning is encouraged by the teachers' high expectations of the students' work, for example, Year 7's presentation of map work. Probing and challenging questions are a very strong feature of the teaching of geography; students respond well, as observed during a Year 11 lesson on migration. Teachers use very good teaching methods of a practical nature to involve students in their learning, which is a strength of the department. Individual, partner and small group work is well linked to a variety of activities and tasks, which very successfully ensures all students are working at an appropriate level. Both long term planning and lesson planning are good and very thorough; this enhances the progression and development of students' learning. Teachers make good use of a range of resources to enhance their teaching, such as, the use of a high quality video extract on floods in the south east of England and the aftermath of earthquakes. This successfully reinforces learning. Teachers are flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of students with special educational needs and give them good support. There are occasions when higher attaining students need to be extended even further in order to improve standards. Overall, students' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are good; this further enhances the students' learning.
152. The head of department shows very good leadership, vision and management. The curriculum is well planned and all members of the department are involved. Good planning makes for consistency in the teaching, and, consequently, in the learning of all students. The use of computers is planned and the time used effectively within the curriculum, but limitations of access limit some investigative elements especially in Year 10. The amount of fieldwork has declined over the last four years; students are receiving insufficient first hand experiences in order to underpin their work in the classroom. Teachers make good use of their assessment information and other associated data in order to track the students' progress, which informs curriculum planning. Geography resources are satisfactory; however, further financial investment is required to enhance the range and number of textbooks.

153. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; all the issues of the last report have been successfully dealt with. There has been steady and sustained improvement in examination results, teaching and learning. The development of the curriculum and the associated schemes of work have further strengthened the subject. Geography teachers work closely as a team and they are very supportive to one another; they are all very enthusiastic and committed to the raising of standards still further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and leads to students attaining high standards.
- Students make very good progress in improving their reading and writing because teachers emphasise these skills in lessons.
- Students with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of the very effective planning of lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not use information communication technology enough to help learning in history topics.
- Not enough use is made of information to monitor how well students are achieving.

154. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average. They were an improvement on the results of the previous year and standards have been maintained over recent years. Boys and girls achieved equally well and the students do as well in history as they do in most of their other subjects.

155. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents very good achievement given their levels of attainment on entry to the college. Students place historical events in time, particularly those within their life span. They use a range of sources of evidence to comment about the past. In a Year 7 class students showed very good understanding of the claims of the main contenders to the English throne in 1066 and used sources of evidence in books to discuss ideas in class. In a Year 9 class students gained a very good foundation of knowledge of topics such as the importance of people like Richard Arkwright to developments in the textile industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and use a range of evidence fully to assess his work. Higher attaining students achieve very well in studies about religious change in the 16<sup>th</sup>. Century and understand about the beliefs and attitudes of Catholics and Protestants. Lower attaining students contribute well orally in discussion but in written work many students do not explain their answers enough, and for the minority of students, more so boys than girls there is weakness in grammar, particularly spelling. Students show very good research skills. In a Year 8 class students worked very well obtaining information through the Internet and books to learn about life on Tudor warships.

156. At the end of Year 11 standards are well above average and this shows very good achievement as they build further on their standards at the start of the GCSE course. Many students use different sources of evidence to produce detailed writing on topics such as the agricultural improvements in England in the 18<sup>th</sup>. Century, improving the standard of presentation with the use of computers. Most show understanding of how Hitler conditioned German youth to support his policies, and weigh up the importance of the evidence. GCSE coursework is mostly of a high quality because the projects are very well structured and organised and students take pride in the presentation of work. The quality of written work is very good because students punctuate their work carefully and attention is given to accurate spelling. The minority of students however, does not explain their answers enough in written work and, in studies about Russia the minority is weak in recalling knowledge about developments in Russia in the 1920's.
157. In all years students improve their basic skills in reading and writing because teachers put emphasis on this in lessons. In Year 9 for example, students improved their writing because the teacher gave guidance on how different types of writing helps to understand how historical events can be interpreted. Students with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of close co-operation between teachers and support staff. A totally blind student for example, did well in a lesson on the industrial revolution as he was given opportunity to contribute orally and also benefited from specialist support. Students for whom English is an additional language achieve very well because they receive help from other students when they work in groups, and are supported with lists of key words. Many students make good use of computers to present GCSE coursework but they do not use them enough to research topics because teachers have not stressed the use of computers enough.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and expect much from students in lessons and for homework. This encourages students and leads to good attitudes to learning. A Year 8 project on the Tudor flagship, the 'Mary Rose' was well planned and managed and led to students giving excellent oral and written presentations. The students enjoyed the work, showed independence and made excellent progress as a result. Teachers stress the importance of developing students' literacy skills. Opportunities are regularly given to encourage speaking and writing. In a Year 9 lesson on the industrial revolution students were given guidance in the meaning of words like 'obsolete' and 'innovation' and this helped their understanding of writing about the work of James Watt and Matthew Boulton. Students with special educational needs make very good progress in most lessons because teachers carefully choose resources to support learning and also as a result of the co-operation with other adults who give specialist support. In a Year 7 lesson for example, a student for whom English is an additional language made very good progress in learning about the early Chinese civilisation because the resources helped him improve his knowledge of historical words and phrases. In GCSE work students benefit from the help they receive on how to plan and organise detailed written answers.

Higher and average attaining students structure the work well and strike a good balance between factual information and interpretation, whilst lower attaining students order the work well and take care in presentation. The quality of work is reduced by weakness in explanations, and because they do not use examples to explain answers. The teachers are well qualified; they have much experience of the course and exam requirements and as a result of the guidance they receive achieve well above average results. In some lessons however, learning is slower than expected because teachers talk for a long time and students rely on the teacher too much so they do not think enough about the topic. Marking is regular and the comments help students know how well they have done and how they can improve. The correction of grammar, particularly spelling however, is inconsistent across the subject and as a result a small number of students are not making enough progress in improving their spelling.

159. The quality of leadership and management is good. The development plan provides a clear sense of direction with appropriate emphasis on meeting changes to the curriculum and to further raise standards. The teachers work well as a team and morale is high. The department has good procedures for evaluating GCSE results but does not make enough use of information to monitor students' progress as they move through the college.
160. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The GCSE results have further improved on the above average standards previously reported. The quality of teaching and learning has risen from good to very good overall, and the standards have risen.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and standards on the GNVQ course are very high.
- Students are very confident users of information and communication technology.

### Areas for improvement

- Students in Years 10 and 11 who follow only the core course in information and communication technology are not improving their skills and understanding.

161. No students were entered for GCSE in 2001.

162. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and this represents a good level of achievement. Both boys and girls improve their skills at the same rate, regardless of whether they are higher or lower attainers. Standards of practical work are well above average. Students move confidently between different software applications and higher attainers cut and paste between several applications at the same time. Students are adept at choosing the most appropriate application for a given task and will often use combine the tools within different packages to get the best effect. For example, when producing a logo for a company they use two different graphics packages and clip art images to combine several pictures into one impressive logo. Students' understanding of the effects of information and communication technology is average. They can, for example, say who the logo is meant to appeal to, but middle and lower attainers have difficulty justifying their choice of colour or symbol. Students control events and measure quantities appropriately for their age.

163. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. However, there are significant differences between the achievement of different groups. Those students who are following the GNVQ course are achieving very well and attaining standards that are far higher than usually seen. The higher attaining students use a range of methods for obtaining and transferring information. For example, they grab pieces of information and then either cut and paste or drag them across to combine them. Many move quickly through their work, using shortcuts and hot keys as a matter of course; it took them only 10 minutes, for example, to learn how to set up hyperlinks and then apply them to their own work. Lower attainers, many of whom have special educational needs, make rapid progress in learning new skills. In one lesson alone they learnt how to format tables and by the end had produced professional looking invoices that included images from graphics packages and Internet sites. Students following a course in business technology make the same very good progress as those on the GNVQ course, but a minority follows only the core course. These students do not learn new

skills but instead spend their time applying their existing skills to such tasks as producing a curriculum vitae or record of achievement.

164. Throughout the college students are extremely confident in using information and communication technology and teachers are quick to take advantage of this. In design and technology, for example, the presentation of coursework is considerably enhanced and is used to overcome the difficulties with writing that are experienced by students with special education needs. The science department plays a full role in teaching students how to measure events. The languages department use computers as part of their everyday teaching to improve listening and writing skills and many subjects use computers to analyse information and produce graphs and charts. Only in physical education is there no use of information and communication technology. However, the college has become a victim of its own success and there are now more teachers trying to book time on the computers than there are rooms available.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers have high expectations of their students and expect them to apply new skills very quickly. In one lesson on analysing a consumer's requirements the teacher quickly used a question and answer session to draw out from the students the main points that they needed to consider. The real strength of this approach was actually in the planning, where the teacher had identified a weakness in students' understanding from the previous lesson and specifically targeted the lesson at addressing this issue. After just 15 minutes of the lesson the students were applying their newly learnt skills to a design for a new business. New technology, such as projectors, is used well to ensure that demonstrations are clear and all students get a very clear picture of how to carry out a new skill. Behaviour is handled very effectively. Teachers avoid confrontation by allowing students to cool off for 30 seconds or simply telling them to stand by the door. When talking to a class, the teachers ensure that students are away from the computers so that their concentration is maintained. The one weakness in the teaching is the lack of proper assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9, which leads to students not being aware of how well they are doing and reports to parents not meeting statutory requirements. Learning support assistants are very well briefed by teachers and this allows them to ensure that students with physical disabilities or hearing difficulties are able to play a full part in lessons and achieve as well as other students.
166. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection as a result of the very good leadership and management of the subject. Standards have risen considerably throughout the college as the quality of teaching has improved. The use of information and communications technology in other subjects is now widespread and a strength of the college. This is a remarkable turnaround given the situation at the time of the previous inspection. Standards could still be improved for those students following the core course and the college already has plans to address this by providing an accredited course for all students that is appropriate for their level of attainment.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Overall, the provision for modern foreign languages is **very good**.

#### Strengths.

- The good quality of teaching is leading to rising standards and students achieving well.
- There has been very good leadership and management of the subject. The recently appointed head of department has not yet had sufficient time to make an impact in the subject, but has already established clear and realistic priorities for development.
- The high quality of the accommodation and the very good resources available for the subject, especially for information and communication technology are enabling teachers to create a very good learning environment.

#### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and support of teaching in the classroom has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all teaching is of a high standard and that best practice is shared.
- The range of work provided for students at all levels of attainment in some classes.

167. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average in French and Italian, and broadly average in German. Results have risen steadily from the already good levels at the last inspection. This was the case for both boys and girls. Students do better in modern languages than in most of their other subjects. A number of students study languages as an integral part of their vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. All of the languages taught exceeded the targets set for them by the college. The college has exceeded the national target laid down by the DfES for Language Colleges for more than fifty per cent of students to study two languages in years 10 and 11.

168. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards students attain by the end of Years 9 and 11 are above average and this represents a good level of achievement. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls or between the different ethnic groups in the college. There are no wide differences in achievement across the different levels of attainment found in the college. Students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well. There are no significant differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject or across the languages being taught. Attainment is rising over time.

169. By the end of Year 9, students answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as where they went on holiday and what the area was like, their homes and the area where they live, the parts of the human body, descriptions of people and their leisure time activities. Students learn to listen carefully to the teacher, to audiotapes and to other students when they are speaking they are able to understand the teachers' instructions in the language being taught. The vast majority of students are confident speakers and try hard with pronunciation. By the end of Year 9 most lower and middle attaining students can carry out short conversations with a number of exchanges and can express their likes and dislikes and their opinions about the topics being taught. These strengths in speaking and listening were clearly demonstrated in a Year 8

German lesson where students were discussing television programmes. The teacher made use of very good question and answer techniques to make students use and vary their language to fit different situations and to express their likes and dislikes about the programmes. As a result students are very competent speakers and have a good deal of self-confidence in their own ability. Students generally develop their reading skills through reading textbooks and worksheets to find the answers to questions. Teachers make good use of authentic materials to add further interest and challenge. At the time of the last inspection there were inadequate resources for reading in the library. These are much improved and provide a good additional resource both for study of topics and for reading for pleasure. In their written work, a majority of students is able to write short accurate paragraphs by age 14. High attaining students write good descriptive pieces about themselves and their families, their holidays and their leisure time using good range of tenses, descriptive language and accurate grammar.

170. By the end of Year 11, students extend these topics as preparation for GCSE and add others such as their intentions when they leave college, peoples' personal characteristics and their views about college uniform. Students have very good opportunities to use information and communication technology to research, and to write, edit and enhance their work. The subject makes a good contribution to students' numeracy development when students use graphs and tables to present data from surveys they have carried out. In many lessons there is an emphasis on grammar, punctuation and spelling and this makes a good contribution to students' literacy development.
171. The quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is good in all years. It is rarely less than satisfactory and is at least good in more than half the lessons. A strong feature of all of the teaching is teachers' very good control of their classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and can, for example, explain the complexities of grammar and agreement in all the languages that they teach. As a result students are confident that they can produce work which is correct. Where teaching is at its best, teachers provide a range of challenging activities which maintain students' interest and which move along at brisk pace. In these lessons teachers make creative use of overhead projectors, authentic texts, role plays, group work, writing and listening tasks to produce a varied programme. A feature of the best teaching is that teachers' have high expectations of students' performance and students respond by working very well. Relevant homework is regularly set. Teachers have had a high level of training in the use of information and communication technology. An outstanding example of this was seen with a Year 7 class where the teacher made excellent use of computers, interactive whiteboards and challenging programmes to create exciting and challenging work which students enjoyed and which resulted in very strong reinforcement of their language. Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or very good, there are two features that make the difference. In some lessons the teacher lapses into English too often and where it is not necessary. This was seen, for example, where teachers gave instructions in the language being taught and then immediately repeated them in English. This is often not needed because the students

understand well enough. In other lessons, teachers do not provide sufficiently well for the range of attainment found in most classes and there is a lack of work specifically tailored to the needs of either higher or lower attaining students. In most lessons there are good relationships between students and with their teachers. Students show good attitudes to work. When teaching is less than satisfactory the level of challenge was unsatisfactory. Students spent a lot of time revising vocabulary that they clearly already knew.

172. The curriculum is very good and all students have opportunities to study at least two foreign languages. There are good assessment procedures in place. These provide consistent data for tracking students' attainment and progress, for making decisions about the curriculum and for setting new targets for development. The accommodation and resources for the subject are very good. The funding available for developing the Language College has been very well spent and this has been a contributory factor in the steady rise in standards since the last inspection. The monitoring and support of teaching in the classroom has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all teaching is of a high standard and that best practice is shared. The recently appointed head of department has not yet had sufficient time to make an impact in the subject, but has already established clear and realistic priorities for development. The college's management of the subject has been very good. The Language College is now well established and the advantages it has brought have been to the benefit of all students. The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection.
173. The college has been a DfES designated Language College since 1997. The substantial additional funds that this has brought to the college have been very well used for the benefit of all students. The subject now occupies a suite of rooms that have been re-fitted and provide a pleasant working area. All the classrooms have very good resources and some have interactive whiteboards. There is an information and communication technology room attached to the department. The library has also had substantial development.
174. The languages on offer at present are Russian, Italian, Spanish, French and German. More than half of the students study two modern languages for GCSE with considerable success. The management and teaching staff have shown a high level of commitment in establishing and developing the college to its present strong position.
175. One teacher from the college teaches in the eight main primary schools and this gives primary school students an early taste of languages learning. The college's language facilities for information and communication technology are open to other schools to use, and this is a facility that is widely used. The staff frequently work with other teachers and contribute to courses run by the local education authority for languages teachers. This very good contribution to the local community is a strong feature of the college's development. The college also has international links with schools in many countries including a Comenius link with Germany and Lithuania.

176. The college has ambitious but achievable targets for future development.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average at the end of both key stages.
- Students achieve well as a result of the very good quality of teaching, high standards of behaviour and a well-planned curriculum that absorbs students' interest.
- Students enjoy lessons; they work well together and show respect to each other and to teachers.
- As a result of good systems for assessing students' efforts, they always know what they have to do to improve.
- The department is very well run.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no weaknesses.

177. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were far above the national average. This was the case for both boys and girls. This is because of very good teaching, but also because of the high proportion of students who have benefited from high quality instrumental lessons from visiting teachers. High standards in GCSE work have been evident over the last three years. Students do better in music than in most of their other subjects.

178. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment by the end of Years 9 are above average and well above average by the end of Year 11. This represents a very good level of achievement for these students, whose levels of attainment were average when they joined the college. This is the case for all students, irrespective of their prior attainment. Students have good attitudes to their work; they enjoy the practical aspects of the subject, taking pride in what they do. Special educational needs students achieve very well because teachers are clear about what these students should do during music projects and they often receive extra help from classroom assistants who join in with the practical spirit of lessons, adding to the fun and excitement. In one exceptional lesson, a hearing impaired boy successfully directed the work of a small group who were creating complex rhythm patterns using a variety of handclaps. His friend, and the supervising support assistant, used sign language to help him, and his impairment in no way stopped him participating fully and making good progress. Higher attaining students achieve well because teachers identify extra things that these students can do. In one exciting lesson, higher attaining Year 9 students created complex compositions on computers while the main body of the class practised electronic keyboard technique. Very good work using computers was also seen in a Year 10 GCSE class. Those receiving instrumental lessons, and those who attend extra-curricular musical activities, achieve very well, often performing inside and outside college to appreciative audiences. Boys show similar levels of concentration to girls. Whilst good work was seen on the available computers, opportunities to use computer applications is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 overall because there are not enough machines or ancillary equipment. There is regular satisfactory development of students' literacy skills; students describe heard music and complete weekly logs in which they thoughtfully reflect on what they have been doing. Written work is checked regularly by teachers for quality of content.

179. By the end of Year 9, students successfully perform on a range of instruments. In one Year 8 class, students learnt how to play notes on an electric keyboard using the correct fingers. As a result, their playing became more fluid and relaxed. Students successfully compose using basic structures of music. A Year 7 class successfully used superimposed rhythmic patterns as they improvised clock beats in time to an electronic keyboard. When performing these pieces to the rest of the class, students showed very high levels of concentration in order to play the pieces accurately and convincingly. Students listen to music with open minds, and higher attaining students describe what they hear using well-developed music vocabulary.
180. By the end of Year 11, students perform to a high standard, with some students having considerable accomplishments on more than one instrument. For instance, one girl in the Year 11 GCSE group was a most accomplished violinist and pianist, and many others in this group displayed impressive levels of musical accomplishment. This particular girl conducted a rehearsal of string players after college in preparation for the full band rehearsal. Other older students conducted brass and woodwind groups. Such opportunities for responsibility have a positive impact on their levels of maturity and overall musicianship. Their high standards of performance help them to write their own convincing music that shows a sense of clear shape and structure. For instance, in one Year 11 class, students were experimenting with writing a theme and variations using electronic keyboards. They successfully modulated from major to minor keys and explored devices such as sequence, repetition and imitation with growing confidence. Written coursework is also completed to a high standard.
181. The quality of teaching, and subsequently of students' learning, is very good and is a major strength of the department. In some lessons, the quality of teaching is exemplary with excellent levels of challenge that students rise to with enthusiasm. Teachers have very high levels of personal musical skill and communicate their own high standards in a most animated and engaging way. As a result, students are eager to learn and show no sign of self-consciousness. The planning of lessons is detailed and thorough. This gives a sense of solid structure to lessons with students very clear about what is expected by the end of lessons. The teachers' excellent management of students creates a rewarding learning atmosphere and trusting relationships. Teachers always stimulate students' curiosity and correct occasional over excitedness is a sensitive way that doesn't interfere with the students natural effervescence and enthusiasm. Resources are very well used to keep the pace of learning high. In one intriguing after college session, students were learning to use disco equipment in a professional way by manipulating the sound decks, thinking carefully about the creation of innovative forms of dance music. Assessments are used very well to give students a clear idea of how they can improve and teachers take full note of the results to improve their own teaching. All in all, the very high quality of teaching has a major impact on the well above average standards attained. The quality of instrumental teaching is high and fully supports the efforts of the main two teachers to improve standards.

182. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is clear planning for future developments and a focus on continually improving standards. The accommodation has been considerably improved, although there is still some intrusive sound from instrumental lessons that interferes with some full class lessons. The resources for learning have also improved. The issues for improvement from the last inspection have been dealt with; the amount of time for music lessons has improved and there is a better stock of electronic keyboards to support practical music making. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 as a result of the regular timetabling of lessons.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- A GCSE course has been successfully introduced and students attain results that are above the national average.
- Extra-curricular sport provides good opportunities for all students, especially the gifted and talented, to excel.
- The department is making sound progress in accessing the curriculum for students with physical disabilities.

### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11.
- The balance of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is too heavily weighted towards games.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the subject's performance, and the development of teaching.

183. The GCSE examination was taken for the first time in 1999, when results were well above the national average. In 2000, the results dipped but rose again in 2001 to be above the national average. However, students do less well in physical education than in the other subjects they take at GCSE.

184. Work seen during the inspection shows that, by the end of Year 9, the majority of students, including those with special educational needs, attain average standards in games, with a significant minority achieving at a higher level. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Boys and girls make sound progress from Years 7 to 9 in football and netball respectively. Standards are above average in football. Most boys show competence in the basic skills of the game, which they develop successfully in the context of strategic play. They play at speed and with precision, selecting skills and techniques to apply principles of attack and defence effectively. The performance of high attaining students in this age range is well illustrated by three Year 9 boys who have been selected to play for the Stockport Schools' Soccer Squad. Standards in badminton are average. Boys and girls of all levels of attainment demonstrate a grasp of the basic shots of the game in practice, and many students can apply their skills effectively in a game. Higher attainers can spot the spaces in their opponents' court and aim their shots towards them, using the smash effectively. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into the physical

education programme and make satisfactory progress alongside their peers. In badminton, for example, a student with a profound hearing impairment, ably supported by his 'signer', played a full part in a doubles game and experienced success.

185. The majority of students have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and they know the reasons why it is necessary to warm up before strenuous exercise. High attaining students name the muscles they are stretching. Students achieve well in the health-related exercise course. Many girls in Years 8 and 9 show an above average knowledge and understanding of aerobic fitness training, and put good physical effort into their own aerobic routines. Individual students explain, fluently, why it is important to take regular aerobic exercise, and to reach their training zones in lessons. Progress in the evaluating and improving performance strand of the curriculum is limited. Students rarely observe, evaluate and comment on performance against specific criteria, and these skills are under-developed. Literacy skills develop satisfactorily in most lessons, as does the use of the technical language of the subject.
186. By Year 11, students studying for the GCSE examination attain average standards and continue to achieve soundly in games. There is a generally good standard of play in badminton and hockey, and the majority of students apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics, effectively, in these games. GCSE coursework reflects a range of knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Whilst standards of attainment are average there is incomplete or missing work in too many books, and the presentation of some Year 11 coursework is poor. Students' use of information and communication technology to support their work is not evident. Overall, the achievement of students taking GCSE is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but could do even better in their theoretical studies.
187. Good standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport, particularly in games. College teams in most of the major games have a good record of success against local schools. For example, four out of the five current year-group soccer teams have won through to their respective quarterfinals of the Stockport Schools Soccer Cup. The college is justifiably proud of the girls' athletics teams who regularly gain success in the Stockport Schools' Athletics Championships. One Year 10 student has been selected to represent Greater Manchester in the national English Schools Athletics Championships, and a disabled Year 10 student has been selected to join the British Paralympic Squad in their training for the next Wheelchair Athletics Olympics.
188. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all years and it promotes satisfactory learning. Teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, students' progress was limited, because of their poor attitudes to learning and the inexperience of the teacher in enthusing a class that was not keen to learn. However, this lesson was an exception, as most students behave well and have positive attitudes to the subject. Relationships between staff and students are good. The management of students and

organisation of lessons are often of a high order, which is reflected, in students' good standards of dress, high levels of participation and the effort and energy they put into lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject, and well-structured tasks build on students' previous knowledge, enabling them to consolidate and improve newly learned skills through practice. However, in some lessons, when all students are given the same task, a few students are unable to achieve the lesson objectives and higher attainers are insufficiently challenged. Although there is satisfactory planning to include disabled students, there is an absence of planning to meet other varied needs. Although satisfactory, teaching sometimes lacks the rigour to raise standards by identifying quality work, setting learning targets and insisting on good quality of movement. Low level, immature behaviour, inattentiveness and lack of respect for equipment reflect this, in a few lessons, particularly by boys. On occasions, learning is not as good as it could be.

189. When learning is most effective, teachers have high expectations of students' attainment. This was well illustrated in a girls' aerobic fitness training lesson, where the teacher successfully maintained a demanding pace of learning through probing questioning, which challenged students intellectually, well-balanced by an emphasis on good quality aerobic performance. Students' evaluation of their own work revealed that they had had a challenging and satisfying experience, to which their own creative efforts had made a significant contribution. Planning for involving students in evaluating and improving their own and others' performance has improved since the last inspection, but this aspect is still an area for improvement to give greater opportunities for students to observe, evaluate and comment on performance against specific criteria. Marking of GCSE written coursework is inconsistent. Although marking is generally regular and encouraging, in some books there are few comments advising students on what progress they are making and how they could improve their work. There are insufficient demands on students to complete missing or unfinished work on a regular basis. Teachers' good planning to develop students' literacy skills needs to be extended to include numeracy and information and communication technology. Good opportunities exist for the gifted and talented in the extra-curricular programme.
190. A strength of the department is the committed, well-qualified staff, who work well together. The subject is satisfactorily led, but there are aspects of management, which are areas for improvement. The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided for students are unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, inadequate time is spent on orienteering and gymnastics, particularly for boys, to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum to sufficient depth. The curriculum is also unbalanced, being too heavily weighted towards games. Year 8 boys and girls do not have equal access to the curriculum. Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11, as all students do not study two areas of activity. The department has done good work in accessing the curriculum for students with physical disabilities. Health and safety risk assessments have yet to be completed. Overall, monitoring of the work of the department is less than satisfactory, as it results in inconsistencies that hinder students' attainment and progress. For example, there is no co-ordinated

approach towards the teaching and marking of the theoretical aspects of the GCSE course. There is no formal monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching, which also leads to inconsistencies in practice. The cleanliness and maintenance of the gymnasium and the adjacent changing rooms are unsatisfactory, and litter detracts from the outdoor learning environment.

191. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. GCSE has been successfully introduced and standards of attainment in physical activities have been maintained. However, the quality of teaching has declined. Outdoor facilities have been improved considerably.

## Outdoor Education

Overall, the provision for outdoor education in Years 10 and 11 is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no weaknesses.

192. Outdoor education is offered as a non-examination option in Years 10 and 11. There are currently 127 students taking the course, which provides good opportunities for students to undertake a variety of challenging activities, such as climbing, canoeing and problem solving activities.

193. The quality of teaching is very good, resulting in very good learning. Teachers have an infectious enthusiasm that motivates students and makes them keen to learn. A key factor contributing to the effectiveness of the teaching is the policy to have a learning support teacher present in every lesson. In the lessons observed, this was very well organised, providing effective support for the teacher and students. Very good organisation and class management, with an emphasis on safe practice, are strong features of the teaching. Students are set a demanding pace of learning within safe parameters. Effective use of a range of teaching strategies ensures that the students are involved in decision-making, problem solving and taking some responsibility for their own learning. Students respond well to the high expectations of the teachers, and their behaviour and attitudes are good. They show interest and excitement in what they are learning.

194. The course is well led and managed. It is staffed by teachers from across the curriculum, who have created a vibrant ethos for the course. The classroom base has attractive, colourful displays, celebrating the students' work and experiences. There is a clear sense of direction and purpose. Safety issues are well documented, and risk assessments in outdoor activities are in place.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- There are good opportunities for students' spiritual development.
- Leadership of the department is very good
- The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- More independent learning opportunities to enable students to research and explore areas of interest and develop their own responses.
- Wider experiences of people and places of other faiths.
- Assessment in order to be able to monitor student progress across the years.

195. Results for the short course GCSE examination in 2001 were above the national average. This is the first group of students to enter for the examination; all students followed the GCSE syllabus. This represents a good achievement for the department. Boys and girls achieved equally well and the students do as well in religious education as they do in most of their other subjects.

196. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement given their levels of attainment on entry to the college. Most students are acquiring a good body of knowledge about the Christian faith, and can identify the key features of a church. The visit to the local church ensures that they have first hand knowledge of the building and its features. A Year 7 class observed demonstrated a clear understanding of the nature of baptism as a 'joining event', and were able to relate it to their own experiences. Students recognise the key symbols of the faiths studied, although their understanding of the significance of the symbols was not demonstrated. Students in Year 8 have a satisfactory understanding of the Hindu belief in re-carnation, but they do not readily link this knowledge with previous work on Buddhism. In Year 9 students use a case study of a reformed drug addict to consider the change that came over her life. Higher attaining students can identify the effect of her faith on her reformation. Students consider the concept of heaven and hell, and they can recount some of the miracles of Jesus, many considering the feelings of onlookers of the time. Lower attaining students limit their writing to the events themselves.

197. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow the course designed for entry to the short course GCSE examination. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 11 are average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. They consider contemporary moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia and environmental issues, and higher attaining students can relate religious teaching to these moral dilemmas. Most students generally note the religious teachings, but do not consider the validity of them. Students recognise that there may be different views of these dilemmas and

that these views may be changed by circumstances. More thoughtful students reflect on the difficulty of these decisions, less motivated students limit themselves to their own views. Lower attaining students make short responses, linked to their prior opinion rather than also reflecting the effect of religious teaching. Little opportunity for extended writing was seen, however a very good essay on life and death issues demonstrated that higher attaining students could give clear explanations for belief, quoting the relevant scripture. Students study the Holocaust as an example of extreme racial prejudice, and have a clear understanding of the events leading up to it. They do not relate this work to their Year 9 history studies however, so time is lost in revisiting it.

198. The level of achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good because students generally work with interest and their homework provides opportunity for them to demonstrate understanding. They are keen to respond to questions in class and record the facts that they learn in their books. Their responses are generally accurate, but they do not develop their answers further than strictly necessary and this reluctance to go further limits their achievement.
199. In the GCSE groups, most students are achieving satisfactorily. Boys in particular are keen to offer their views although they are less enthusiastic about written work designed to enable them to compare views and support their opinions. Students' responses are generally superficial and in some groups there is insufficient understanding of the religious principles involved to enable students to make more than a cursory comment about them. The lack of homework reduces the opportunities for extended writing or for completion of work. With greater opportunity for essay writing the majority of students could develop their ideas further and so make better progress.
200. The work of boys in particular is marred by untidy handwriting although their spelling is generally satisfactory. Teachers identify misspelt words, but there was no evidence that students corrected their work, even when reminded by their teachers. Missing and undeveloped work limited the progress of some students. Where the teaching inspired students to consider the real moral dilemmas, progress was better. The progress of students with special educational needs is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Some modified material is used to support lower attaining students in the lower years, and the support of learning assistants ensures that students with physical needs are supported well. A good example was a lesson where not only did an assistant sign to a hearing impaired student, but his friends did also. Information and communication technology is not yet developed within the subject; students are free to use it for research and to present their work if they wish.
201. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9, where most lessons are taught by specialists and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Lessons are well planned and the topics selected are designed to capture the interest of young people. In the best lessons teachers enabled students to discover for themselves, using the students' own experiences to aid development of understanding. A good example was a lesson where they gathered evidence of 'joining' strategies in secular clubs and then related them to the membership of a church. Where students become less involved and the teacher is the focus of the lesson, students become

dependent and fail to make the necessary effort to understand the concepts being studied. Students are offered good opportunities to reflect on such concepts as good and evil, and in some lessons teachers are aware of opportunities to develop the spirituality of their students. Most teachers take care to involve all students in responses and the good relationships between teachers and students support a busy learning environment. In a minority of classes, weaker student management results in a minority of students claiming an unfair share of their teacher's attention and the progress of the majority in these classes suffers.

202. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The successful introduction of the short course has enabled teachers and students to mark their achievements, and specialist teachers now teach most lessons in the two lively and attractive religious education bases. The handbook is well documented and resources have been developed that will support the work of non-specialist teachers. A weakness in the management is the lack of departmental meetings for the teachers, which results in limited sharing of good practice and time lost delivering information about the college. The department is designing a series of assessments in Year 7 that will allow teachers to monitor the progress of students across the years in the key elements of the Agreed Syllabus. At present this has not been extended to other years. Day-to-day marking is regular and constructive, however students do not have a clear picture of their progress and are not involved in their assessment. In the GCSE course there is insufficient independent work to measure the attainment and assess the understanding of students.
203. Progress since the last report has been very good. There is now enough time to deliver the Agreed Syllabus and the subject is taught by an identified team of teachers. A second specialist teacher has been appointed and the two subject bases present a lively and attractive environment for learning.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

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

### Strengths

- Consistent, high quality teaching that leads to very effective learning.
- There is thorough and constructive evaluation of students' work.

### Areas for Improvement

- There is a need to ensure that there is consistency with regard to the assessment and internal verification of vocational evidence across all the subject areas.

204. The college has had a sustained interest in promoting vocational education for many years. Since the start of this term the college has been running four Part One GNVQs at Intermediate level. However, subjects will assess individual needs and enter students at Foundation level if this is deemed to be more appropriate.

205. Business Studies also run a highly popular GCSE course. Six groups are currently operating in Year 11 with a total of 130 students and in Year 10 GCSE is running alongside GNVQ. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations in business studies were far above the national average. This was the case for both boys and girls. High standards in GCSE work have been evident over the last three years. Students do better in business studies than in most of their other subjects. In business studies the standards attained by the current Year 10 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are well above average. All students achieve very well.

206. Students are attaining above average standards in each of the vocational areas and achieve very well. Students have a very good understanding of the central ideas and concepts of each vocational area. For example, in a Year 10 business lesson students demonstrated excellent understanding of key terms and applied these very effectively when producing pieces of extended writing. Students discuss a local company that they were about to visit and clearly understood its relationship to its parent company and were well aware of the brand names that it traded under.

207. The quality of teaching and learning within the vocational areas is very good and there are examples of excellent teaching within the information and communication technology and business areas. The teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Students work very well indeed. Lesson objectives are clearly outlined at the beginning of the lesson and students know what they are meant to do and then work very effectively. Subject content is accurate and is well planned and presented clearly. Working methods are suitable to the task and enable the students to make very good and rapid progress. Students are managed very well and their individual learning needs are fully recognised. Students following the GCSE business studies course are challenged and inspired to achieve at the very highest levels. All students do benefit from thorough, evaluative marking of their work which clearly shows students where they are going wrong and what they need to do to improve their writing and extend their knowledge. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing opportunities for independent study. However, there is a need to ensure consistency of assessment and internal verification of vocational evidence across all the subject areas.

## PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

208. Provision for students with physical disabilities is good. They all make a full and active contribution to the life of the college. An excellent inclusion philosophy enables them to have full access to the curriculum, except for the minority who are disadvantaged due to the severity of their disability. The success of very good quality support received by students and staff is due to the college's deliberate policy to formally train all support staff. They form a knowledgeable and dedicated team, and are highly valued. The focus of their work is on developing students'

independence and social skills. This they do successfully, enabling students to make good progress.

209. Students are well behaved and relationships with adults and their peer group are amicable. Other students are very supportive of those with physical disabilities and this is a strength of the college.
210. Teaching is good, and shows an informed awareness of students' needs. Teachers are able to change the focus of a lesson to accommodate students' individual needs and they use support to maximum effect. This is often the result of effective preparation and consultation. Students develop confidence as their interests are stimulated and their knowledge and understanding is developed alongside their peers. Care should be taken to ensure that where a physical disability is accompanied by a learning difficulty, that support assistants encourage students to be as independent as possible and not do too much for them.
211. The management of students with physical disabilities is very good. Documentation is detailed and students' progress is regularly monitored. The college is effectively meeting the needs of students as outlined in their statements, but individual education plans (IEPs) need to be more focused, with fewer and more realistic targets. Currently, each area of the curriculum is not identifying ways in which they might help students achieve their targets. For example, in physical education, specific targets should be identified in teachers' planning together with strategies for achieving them.
212. Physical access to the college varies greatly. Some entrances to the premises are too narrow and not accessible to students in wheelchairs. Two chair lifts have been installed to enable students to negotiate steps within the college and some students are able to operate these themselves under supervision. Although most students follow a programme of physical education, access to changing rooms is not easy. However, the policy of making students change on their own should be discouraged, unless this is specifically for reasons of privacy.