

INSPECTION REPORT

KING JAMES I COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Bishop Auckland

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114306

Headteacher: Mr E B Lott

Reporting inspector: Ms J Jones
12460

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th January 2002

Inspection number: 199767

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Secondary
College category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
College address:	South Church Road Bishop Auckland Co Durham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Bake
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

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12460	J Jones	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of college is it?</p> <p>The college's results and pupils' and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils and students taught?</p> <p>How well is the college led and managed?</p> <p>What should the college do to improve further?</p>
12775	J Goodchild	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the college care for its pupils and students?</p> <p>How well does the college work in partnership with parents?</p>
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	English	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27050	V Blackburn	Team inspector	Science	
12331	V Grigg	Team inspector	<p>Art and design</p> <p>The unit for special educational needs</p>	
31779	V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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31329	K Barratt	Team inspector	History	
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	<p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Physical education</p>	
7483	R Donne	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31660	M Young	Team inspector	Music	
30046	R Parker	Team inspector	<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
13734	H Davies	Team inspector	<p>Religious education</p> <p>Sixth-form business education</p>	
30596	J Brown	Team inspector	Sixth-form physics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

King James I Community College is a mixed 11 to 19 community college, taking pupils and students from the town of Bishop Auckland. The college is smaller than average and numbers have fallen since the previous inspection, due to population changes in the area. There are 794 students, of whom 91 are in the sixth form. There are approximately the same numbers of boys and girls. There are very few students from ethnic minorities; only 4 students speak English as an additional language and none are at an early stage of learning English. There are 19 pupils and students from traveller families. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average at 31 per cent and unemployment in the area is high. The college is in receipt of additional funding for social inclusion and out of hours study. There are 194 students on the register of special educational needs; this is above average. There are 56 students with statements of special educational needs; this is well above average. Of these, 12 are students with physical difficulty for whom special provision is made. There is a learning support unit for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start in Year 7 has been well below average, until the current Year 7 where attainment is higher but still below average.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

The college is effective. Although standards are below average overall, and recent test and examination results have been well below average, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in most lessons, achievement is good and behaviour and attitudes are good. Teaching is good overall and the college is very well led and managed. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

What the college does well

- Leadership is very good and provides clear educational direction for the college.
- Good teaching enables pupils to reach average standards in a number of subjects, and above average standards in business education, by the end of Year 11.
- The college makes very good provision for pupils and students with a wide variety of educational and social needs.
- Pupils' and students' personal development and spiritual development are good.
- Links with the community are very good and community drama in particular makes an important contribution to pupils' education.

What could be improved

- Standards of literacy are well below average, and pupils in Year 11 are underachieving in mathematics.
- There is some underachievement by girls in a number of subjects.
- Provision for music is unsatisfactory and standards in Years 7 to 9 are very low.
- There is not enough teaching time for modern foreign languages and standards are very low by the end of Year 11.
- Attendance is well below average and affecting standards significantly.
- Systems for assessing and analysing information about pupils' and students' attainment, progress and behaviour are inefficient.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in April 1998. Improvement since then is good. Teaching has improved and, in spite of a dip in GCSE results in 2001, test and examination results have risen at a faster rate than the national trend, though standards of literacy remain low. Leadership has improved significantly, and monitoring and strategic planning are now good. Governors are now effective. Strategies for improving attendance are now very good, though attendance remains well below average. Most statutory requirements are now met, but pupils still do not have a daily act of worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16- and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

National test results and achievements of Year 9 pupils

Over the four year period 1997 to 2001, the results of national tests for pupils aged 14 were well below average but they improved at a faster rate than the national trend. In 2001, the results were well below the national averages in English and mathematics and below average in science. When compared with those of similar schools, the overall results were below average. They were well below average in English but above average in mathematics and average in science. The standards of work of the present Year 9 pupils are below average but pupils achieve well in relation to their well below average starting points at the beginning of Year 7. Standards are average in English and science. They are below average in mathematics, though the pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils generally achieve their highest standards in art and design, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education where standards of work seen in the inspection were average. In music, pupils fall well short of expectation because the college has been unable to appoint a permanent music teacher and teaching is unsatisfactory. They fall short of expectation in modern foreign languages because most pupils have too little teaching time to develop language skills.

GCSE results and achievements of Year 11 pupils

In the period 1997 to 2001, the GCSE results were well below average but improved at a faster rate than the national trend. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher GCSE grades A*-C improved although the average¹ point score was well below the average for similar schools and the governors' targets were not fully achieved. However, these results were average by comparison with those schools where pupils achieved similar results two years earlier in their tests at the age of 14. The highest GCSE results were in art and design,

¹ Where A*=8, A=7, B=6, C=5, D=4, E=3, F=2, G=1

business studies and geography. Girls do better than boys but by a smaller margin than is seen in most schools. Overall, the standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are below average for their age. However, standards are average in art and design, geography, history, ICT, physical education and religious education. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, though there is underachievement in mathematics by a significant minority of pupils, and in modern foreign languages for the same reasons as in Years 7 to 9.

Results and achievements of sixth-form students

A-level and vocational qualification results were below average for the last three years, though they improved in 2001. The current Year 13 students' standards of work are average overall and represent good achievement. Year 12 students' standards of work in the new AS courses, and in vocational (GNVQ) courses, are in line with what could be expected at this stage in the year.

In all years, in spite of good achievement in English lessons, standards in literacy are well below average in subjects across the curriculum and adversely affect pupils' and students' ability to express themselves in speech or writing. Standards in numeracy are below average but pupils are able to carry out measurements and simple calculations where necessary in subjects across the curriculum. The improving standards in ICT are having a positive impact on pupils' standards in many subjects.

PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Good. Most pupils enjoy college and many are involved in the good range of activities outside lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Behaviour around the college is generally good but in a few lessons, pupils take advantage of inexperienced teachers. The rate of fixed-term exclusions is above average, but many are for very short periods. The rate of permanent exclusions is average.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on well with each other. Pupils with physical difficulty are respected and helped.
Attendance	Poor. Although unauthorised absence has dropped since the previous inspection, some parents still permit their children to stay away from college.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching and learning are good overall. The best teaching is in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Pupils learn well in English because teaching in all years is good. Teachers know their subjects well and most lessons are lively and challenge pupils to think. Teaching is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 because teachers have adopted new guidelines successfully and pupils are becoming more confident, particularly with mental mathematics. Mathematics teaching, though satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, is less effective in challenging pupils to think and learn. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 in science and leads to satisfactory learning and achievement. Although teachers have a good grasp of their subject and requirements of the curriculum, they do not encourage pupils to think for themselves, nor give enough guidance about how pupils can improve. Teaching is very good in ICT, art and design and history. Teaching and learning in music are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because there is no permanent teacher. Planning and records are so meagre that teachers covering the lessons know little about pupils' progress or the previous work taught. Literacy is promoted well in history and geography, but less well in other subjects, and there is insufficient concerted effort to improve literacy in all subjects. Numeracy is reinforced when necessary in a number of subjects but there is no consistent strategy applied across the whole college for improving skills with number. Teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils with particular difficulties and most match the work well to individuals. There is little planned provision for gifted and talented pupils, though there is some in geography where these pupils make good progress, and in physical education where progress is satisfactory. In some lessons, teachers do not ensure that girls play an active part.

Teaching in the sixth form is almost always good, and just over a third of lessons seen were very well taught and enabled students to learn well. Teaching and learning in geography are very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall but with strengths and weaknesses. There is not enough time for modern foreign languages from Year 8 onwards. Extra-curricular opportunities, particularly for drama, are good. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good and includes effective guidance on drugs and sex education. There are very good opportunities to learn about the world of work. Links with the community and other schools are very good. There is no provision, as required, to teach religious education in the sixth form, and there is no statutory daily act of worship.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Provision is well managed and specialist support is effective. Provision for pupils with physical difficulties is very good and enables these pupils to be fully integrated into the life of the college.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are taught to care about each other and they work well together. Their understanding of moral issues is good and there are examples of good spiritual development in a number of subjects, including English, art and design, geography and drama.

Aspect	Comment
How well the college cares for its pupils	Very good. There is good provision for child protection and to ensure the health and safety of all pupils. There are many well-managed and effectively co-ordinated initiatives to support groups and individuals. Pupils are well known to teachers and their welfare is an overriding concern of the college. Pupils' work is assessed regularly but the college does not use information about assessment efficiently. Procedures for improving attendance are very good.
How well the college works in partnership with parents	Parents think highly of the college and have confidence in the leadership. Information provided by the college is good and most parents support their children by attending meetings. However, a small but significant number do not ensure that their children attend college regularly.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior managers are supported by at least good management in most departments. The need to improve attainment is at the heart of all the college does. There are enough teachers to cover the curriculum in all subjects except modern foreign languages where there is a temporary appointment, and in music where there is an unfilled post; both are due to teacher shortages. Accommodation is good overall though some specialist rooms are too small and there is no lift for wheelchair users. There are sufficient resources. The college compares its performance and provision with that of other schools and makes satisfactory efforts to ensure best value in its provisions and services, taking good account of the temporary nature of a significant part of its funding.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors take their responsibilities seriously and know the college's strengths and weaknesses well.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is effective monitoring of teaching and overall monitoring of results. The college does not analyse some information, such as exclusions and attendance, closely enough.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall, and very good use of funds for specific purposes. Resources are generally used well except for library books, which are underused. Staffing in modern foreign languages is not used efficiently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The college has high expectations and children make good progress.• Parents feel they can contact the college at any time and they will be listened to.• The college is well led.• There has been a big improvement over the last three years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some reviews for parents of children with special educational needs are not useful, and access for wheelchair users is limited.

Inspectors agreed with all the points the parents liked. They found that reviews for children with special educational needs are carried out correctly and effectively. They found that access for pupils in wheelchairs is generally good, but the lack of a lift does deny them access to upstairs rooms. If necessary, lessons are moved to downstairs rooms. They could find no fault with the way reviews for children with special educational needs are carried out.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form, with 62 students in Year 12, and 29 in Year 13, is small compared to the national average of 166 students. It is smaller than at the time of the last inspection when there were 122 students on roll. Entry to the sixth form is on the basis of GCSE successes and currently most students have achieved the minimum requirement of four and for some subjects, five GCSE passes at the higher grades of A* to C by the age of 16. Current predictions based on student requests from Year 11 suggest numbers will increase slightly in the next academic year. The staying on rate from Year 11 in 2001 was 45 per cent. Once they are in the sixth form, the staying on rate is good; very few students fail to complete their courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides well for its students considering its size. A good range of learning opportunities is available. Students talk enthusiastically about their life in the sixth form and are appreciative of the quality of support and guidance provided by teachers and tutors. Students can choose from 14 A- and AS-levels and three vocational subjects. Because of its current low numbers, the sixth form is not cost effective however and draws down a subsidy from the main college. Standards are in line with the national average in most subjects, but below average in design and technology. The leadership of senior staff and sixth-form tutors ensures clear educational guidance and every effort is made to provide courses and support to meet individual students' needs and aspirations.

Strengths

- Overall teaching is good; in over one third of lessons it was very good or excellent, resulting in good learning in the lessons seen and work examined.
- Students achieve well to attain average standards from below average GCSE results.
- Provision for students' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- For a small sixth form, the range of learning opportunities is good.
- There are good procedures for monitoring personal and academic progress, which have a positive effect on students' standards. Teachers are aware of the demands of advanced courses.

What could be improved

- Procedures to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality are not effective.
- Students' private study time is not sufficiently organised.
- Most students do not have the opportunity to study religious education, in line with the statutory requirements of the Durham Agreed Syllabus.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory: Provision for students with varying levels of ability is adequate. The written work of Year 13 students meets specifications but is often lacking in structure and rigour.
Physics	Good: Good teaching and a course strongly related to the outside world enable students to achieve as well as expected from their own GCSE results.
Business	Good: Teaching is good and students are well motivated and interested in the subject. Students overall achieve in line with expectations based upon GCSE grades.
Geography	Good: Standards achieved in the A-level course are above the national average. Fieldwork assignments are often of a very high standard. Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and lessons are planned thoroughly.
English	Good: Students achieve well because they are motivated. Teaching is good. Teachers quickly develop the skills appropriate to the demands of the course.

Other subjects visited include:

Art where standards seen are in line with the national average. The quality of teaching is very good and this contributes to students' motivation to succeed and their commitment to the subject.

Design and technology where apart from A-level students examined in 2001, numbers taking the subject are usually very small and students achieve expected grades.

Media studies. Well-planned lessons and lively teaching enable students to build skills effectively and develop understanding of concepts; they achieve as well as expected at AS-level.

Drama where charismatic teaching enables A-level students to achieve well in relation to their individual GCSE results.

Biology. Currently very small numbers choose to study the subject but they usually achieve grades in line with expectations based on their GCSE results.

Modern foreign languages. There are small numbers in the sixth form with mixed success in examinations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Regular feedback from teachers and one-to-one progress reviews every half term help students understand how well they are doing and how to improve. Staff know students well.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. There is clear understanding of the problems associated with managing a small sixth form. Senior management and the acting head of the sixth form, supported by tutors, provide a positive educational direction for the future of sixth-form provision. Procedures take good account of students' preferences; they are helped to do their best and have equal access to the opportunities provided. Assessment information is used well to set targets for improvement. Better planning to improve punctuality and attendance is required.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college helps students to settle well into the sixth form. • They are given help to become independent learners. • They are well informed about their progress. • Teachers are always accessible to help students with their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice about future options. • The college does not respond to views of students. • The range of extra-curricular activities is limited. • Insufficient help with personal problems.

Forty-nine replies were received from the students' questionnaires. Inspectors fully endorse the students' favourable replies. During the inspection, inspectors talked to a large number of students who expressed views that careers advice is good and that the college does respond to the vast majority of student requests. The college provides a range of appropriate activities such as sports and drama outside lessons. Most students also expressed the view that there is always an appropriate person available and willing to listen to and advise on personal problems. The inspection team therefore does not agree with the areas for improvement made in the students' questionnaire.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and pupils' and students' achievements

Results in tests and examinations

Results in tests at the end of Year 9

1. Results are well below average but rising faster than the national trend. This is due mainly to the rise in science results that has been significant in the last two years, rising by about ten per cent a year. There has been a steady rise in mathematics results since 1997, until 2001 when they dipped. The least successful results are in English, which have dropped over the last three years.
2. In English, girls achieve higher results than boys, but by a smaller margin than is seen nationally. In mathematics, boys achieve slightly better results than girls but this is not very different from the national situation where girls are only just ahead of boys. In science, the trend is clearly against the national picture, with boys doing better than girls.
3. The overall results were below average by comparison with schools where a similar proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Results in public examinations at the end of Year 11

4. Results in examinations at the end of Year 11 are well below average and after a steady rise over the previous four years, the average point score in 2001 fell back. However, the trend over the period since 1997 is upwards, at a faster rate than nationally, and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades of A*-C continues to rise.
5. Results in English language in 2001 were well below average for both boys and girls. This reflects the low standard of speaking and writing throughout the college. Girls did better than boys but by less than the national difference. Results in mathematics were also well below average in 2001, with boys getting slightly better grades than girls. Nationally, girls do slightly better than boys. Mathematics results in 2001 were below what could have been expected, from the standards achieved by these pupils two years before at the end of Year 9.
6. The average point score in the combined science examination was close to the national average but the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades of A* to C was below average. As fewer than two-thirds of the year group took the combined paper, and the remainder, who took the single science award, achieved very low results, the overall results for science are actually well below average.
7. In science, no pupils achieved the highest grades of A* or A, and in English and mathematics, the numbers achieving these grades were very low.
8. The most successful of the other subjects were art and design, business studies and geography where the average point score was close to average. In geography, the proportion of pupils achieving A* or A grades was just above average.

9. The lowest results, for both boys and girls, were in French, German and ICT, both in terms of points scored and proportions of pupils reaching the highest grades. Poor results in modern foreign languages are inevitable since there is so little time within the curriculum to cover the courses, either at GCSE level or in Years 8 and 9.
10. By comparison with similar schools, results overall were well below average in 2001. However, the results are average compared with those of schools where the pupils taking the examinations in 2001 had similar results in their tests two years earlier when they were in Year 9. This bears out the judgement by inspectors that overall, pupils make satisfactory progress between Year 9 and Year 11.

Standards in work seen in the inspection

11. Standards seen in work and lessons during inspection week were higher than those indicated by past examination results. This is partly because recent staff and curriculum changes are helping to raise standards, and partly because pupils do better in lessons than in examinations. The poor language skills of many are more of a disadvantage in examinations than in lessons because in lessons, teachers are able to help pupils show and develop their understanding.
12. Standards in English are below average in all years because pupils do not read enough or speak at length enough in many lessons to develop the habit of putting ideas into clear, logical sentences. This, coupled with frequent mistakes with common words, such as spelling 'which' as 'witch' and confusing 'there' with 'their', means that their writing lets them down even when they know what they want to say.
13. Standards in mathematics are also below average in all years, but there is evidence in lessons of an improvement by Year 9, particularly by the lowest attaining pupils. By Year 9, the highest attaining pupils have a good grasp of the four rules of arithmetic and apply these to problems using, for example, percentages, and deriving and solving simple equations. Most pupils in the top groups are working at the higher levels expected for their age, and a few reach the highest levels. Most pupils are working at lower levels, but they have a sound grasp of basic ideas. Standards in Year 11 are not as high as they should be and there is some underachievement by both boys and girls, but particularly by girls. Recent staffing changes are helping to establish a more ambitious culture in the department.
14. In science, pupils reach standards that are below, but not well below, average in all years. The improvement in test results at the end of Year 9 is evidence of the improved practical work and understanding of investigations that underpin learning in science. Most pupils in the top groups reach average standards. Lower attainers reach below average standards, but can carry out investigations into, for example, the way we breathe, and arrive at sensible conclusions. Pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties, can describe what they see in experiments, but cannot say why, for example, objects look different in different coloured light.
15. Standards in ICT are above the level suggested by last year's exam results. This is because there have been important staff changes in the department and a big improvement in resources. Pupils now use sophisticated software packages to carry out practical tasks that are firmly rooted in real-life applications. They work with interest and dedication and many in Year 11 are already working at levels that would earn them grade C at GCSE level.

Pupils' achievements

16. In most years, the attainment of a large majority of the pupils when they enter the college is well below average, as measured by their results in tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6, and by other nationally recognised tests taken early in Year 7. The attainment of pupils in the current Year 7 is below average, but not well below average.
17. In relation to these standards, most pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and in some subjects, is good. Achievement is good in English in all years and in science it is satisfactory in all years. In mathematics, good teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are at present producing only satisfactory achievement because previous planning and teaching have not been as effective, and the improvement in learning is too recent to have made an impact on achievement yet. Achievement in mathematics is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, although all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory because teachers have not been sufficiently ambitious for their pupils and are only just beginning to recognise the potential of some higher attaining pupils and set them high enough targets.
18. There are areas of underachievement. Achievement in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory in all years, in spite of mainly satisfactory teaching, because many pupils from Year 8 onwards have too little time to cover the course adequately or to reinforce their skills frequently enough. Achievement is poor in Years 7 to 9 in music because there is no permanent music teacher and there is a history of unsatisfactory planning in the department and no records of what pupils have learned and can do. The high absence rate is also having an adverse effect on the achievement of pupils who do not attend music lessons regularly. This is a particularly acute problem for those pupils who do not complete examination coursework in Year 11.
19. In English, mathematics and science, girls do less well in examinations in relation to boys than nationally. From observations during the inspection, it is clear that this is usually due not to methods to encourage boys, but rather to some girls being less motivated and interested than boys. In lessons, boys often dominate the discussion and girls do not try to compete.
20. Achievement is at least good in art and design, geography, history and religious education in all years, and in ICT in Years 7 to 9. In these subjects, much of the teaching is very good and inspires pupils to want to work hard and do well.
21. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and in many lessons, it is good. In one Year 9 ICT lesson, pupils with special behavioural needs were so well supported by their teacher and the support assistant that their achievement was very good. In another lesson in Year 11, three pupils with special educational needs achieved very well because the teacher used questions skilfully to check understanding, and a support assistant helped pupils to stay focused on the tasks.

Sixth form

22. Overall, the results at AS- and A-level are below the national average. Group sizes are small and it is difficult to make valid comparisons with national results or identify trends. There were only 50 results in 2001. Results vary between subjects. Students reached average standards in geography and English and just below in business education. In 2001, AS-level results in geography were above the national average. There were no AS- or A-level candidates in mathematics in 2001. In 1999 and 2000, with only three

candidates in total, results were below the national average, with no students achieving a higher A or B grade. Results in physics were also below the national average. At AS-level and Advanced GNVQ², results in business education were broadly in line with the national average for pass grades. In all the subjects selected for a focused inspection, most students achieved at least as well as could be expected in relation to predictions based upon their average GCSE grades.

23. In the subjects that were not inspected in detail, group sizes were also small and results equally variable. In AS-level drama, all eight students gained a grade but only one candidate achieved an A or B grade. At A-level, all the media studies students gained a pass grade but no A or B grades were achieved. A larger group of ten students were entered for design and technology. Results at both the higher and overall grades were below the national average. In the AS-level examination, one candidate out of the two gained a pass. In art and design, two out of three gained a pass grade. Numbers taking modern foreign languages at AS-level were extremely small. In French, one passed with an E grade and two failed. The one student in German gained a D grade.
24. Most students who begin their sixth-form studies at the college complete them. The course completion rate is satisfactory overall.
25. Standards seen during the inspection, both in lessons and from examination of students' files, vary across subjects. In English and geography, standards are above average. Students in Year 12 in both these subjects have adjusted well to the demands of study at this level and are making good progress. This is also the case in AS-level physics. There are no candidates in physics in Year 13. In mathematics and business education, standards are at about the national average. Although results are below average, they represent good achievement in relation to the students' GCSE scores.

Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development

26. The attitudes of pupils towards college are good. Most are prepared to work hard and they get a sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of opportunities after college. Many take part in community drama productions. Pupils from minority groups, and those with special educational needs, are fully integrated into the college community.
27. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good. However, opportunities for collaborative or group work to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills further are missed in many lessons.
28. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning. Those who are withdrawn from lessons for additional literacy support concentrate well and are pleased with each step of progress. Pupils with physical difficulties show determination to participate in as many activities as they can and develop good relationships with their teachers and with other pupils. When they are supported in class, pupils with behaviour difficulties work hard and make very good progress. Those who are helped in the learning support unit appreciate the help that they are given. Though some of them have had difficulty managing their own behaviour in class, they are courteous and show consideration for others within the unit.
29. Pupils move around the college in an orderly manner and are sensitive towards the needs of those with physical difficulties. Behaviour in most lessons is satisfactory, and

² General National Vocational Qualifications

on occasions, very good but in six per cent of lessons it was unsatisfactory. A small number of pupils present challenging behaviour and teachers have to demonstrate good class management skills. This inevitably means that time is taken away from subject teaching and affects the pace of learning of the rest of the class.

30. Since the previous inspection, the instances and number of pupils excluded for a fixed term from the college has significantly increased. In the last academic year, there were 114 periods of fixed-term exclusion involving 62 pupils compared with 20 at the last inspection. However, the college now keeps more accurate records and includes some incidents, including very short fixed-term exclusions that may last as little as half a day. There is no reason to think that behaviour has deteriorated since the previous inspection. The number of pupils permanently excluded has decreased from four at the last inspection to three during the last academic year. There are no systems to analyse reasons for exclusion or to see whether incidents are more prevalent amongst certain groups of pupils. The governing body is appropriately involved at all stages of the exclusion process.
31. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is good. However, the development of pupils' independent learning skills, and their ability to take responsibility for their own learning, are not well established throughout the college. In many lessons, pupils are passive rather than active learners. This slows their overall pace of learning. Teachers have to work hard to stimulate pupils' interest in their studies to motivate them to learn and to encourage them to undertake challenging tasks.
32. Attendance is poor though levels have risen steadily since the previous inspection. For the year 2000/01 attendance was 87.4 per cent; this is well below the national average of 90.8. This does represent, however, a significant improvement since the previous inspection when attendance was recorded as 80.2 per cent. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average but the rate of absence that is approved by parents is well above the national average although the college tries hard to impress upon parents the importance of seeing that their children attend regularly. Pupils are punctual to lessons and lessons started promptly. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

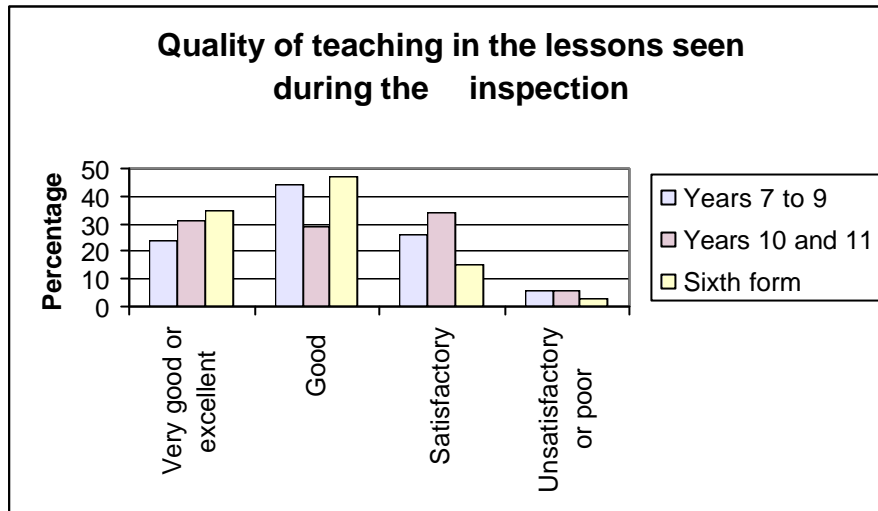
Sixth form

33. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes towards their studies. Most are motivated to learn and work hard to complete their course requirements and research topics. However, independent learning skills are not systematically developed in all subjects. This does not prepare them well for continuing their learning into adult life, where they have to take a high degree of responsibility for their own studies.
34. Relationships between sixth-form students and the main college are good, as are relationships with teachers. Students in the sixth form are good role models and provide support to younger pupils. Some students are involved with the paired reading scheme whilst others have gained the Sports Leader Award and regularly help with a range of sporting events in the main college.
35. Students' attendance is unsatisfactory. Some lessons were poorly attended and monitoring of attendance by tutorial and teaching staff is not rigorous enough. The acting head of the sixth form spends a considerable amount of time finding out students' whereabouts. Though the college demonstrates a supportive attitude towards students, it does too little to engender within students a sense of responsibility and a realisation

that if they do not attend college regularly they reduce their chances of success in final examinations.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Teaching is good overall, with the best teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, as the chart below shows.



36. The drive by the senior management team towards improved teaching, together with a number of recent staff changes, have led to improvement in teaching overall and to teaching that is significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection.
37. Some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in science, music and modern foreign languages. The best teaching seen in the inspection was in art and design, history and ICT. In these subjects, almost all the teaching was at least good, and in over half the lessons, teaching was very good or excellent and led to correspondingly high standards of learning. In Years 10 and 11, satisfactory teaching is leading to satisfactory learning and to correspondingly satisfactory achievement. In Years 7 to 9, good teaching and learning in around two-thirds of lessons are enabling pupils to achieve satisfactorily rather than well because many of the improvements in teaching are due to recent changes in staffing, and the current good, day-to-day learning has not yet had time to make a big impact on long-term progress, and particularly on the achievement of girls.
38. Most teachers know their subjects well and in the best lessons, they use this knowledge to set demanding tasks and ask challenging questions. In an excellent history lesson on the Cuban missile crisis, the teacher's thorough knowledge of the topic enabled pupils to link knowledge of post-Stalinist Russia with the idea of 'brinkmanship' and the role of world statesmen at the time. The best teaching enables pupils to work at their own pace. When teachers provide different tasks for pupils at different levels of attainment, all pupils can take part fully in the lesson and learn well. For example, projects in business education and ICT are designed so that higher attainers can go more deeply into the topic, while others are still able to make progress but are more reliant on the advice from the teacher. In some lessons, the teacher provides too much support and pupils are denied the chance to work independently and think for themselves. This was an issue at the previous inspection.
39. In some lessons, particularly in geography, history and religious education, teachers give pupils the opportunity to work in pairs or groups, so developing their sense of

independence and self-reliance. In English, although teachers are beginning to do this, it is evident that pupils are not used to it and find working in this way difficult. For example, a Year 11 English group worked well and learned effectively while the teacher taught the whole group, but relaxed and stopped concentrating when asked to work in small groups. They were much more comfortable being told than having to find out for themselves.

40. In lessons, particularly those where there is a wide range of ability, teachers sometimes go to great lengths to see that pupils most in need of help are given work that can be easily managed, but they do not consider the effect on higher attaining pupils and do not help them to work independently. In these lessons, the higher attaining pupils often have to wait for the others to catch up.
41. Teachers are good at gauging the rate at which pupils are learning and quick to provide help when it is needed. In a good Year 10 mathematics lesson on simultaneous equations, the teacher recognised the need to help pupils who were finding the work more difficult than their Year 9 work. Pupils learned well because the teacher was quick to spot the mistakes all the class were making and stopped individual work to go over it. He was equally quick to see when individuals needed help, and careful to help pupils without destroying their confidence.
42. Teachers usually have high expectations, both of pupils' work and behaviour. Most insist on pupils being attentive, but in a few lessons, teachers allowed the class to go on talking after the teacher had started speaking. When this happens, pupils quickly lose interest, and if the lesson does not capture their attention, their behaviour deteriorates and they not only learn little but they also stop others learning. Although teachers have had training in managing pupils, and generally pupils are managed well, it is a few years since all staff were trained and some are ready for a refresher course.
43. In most lessons, boys are confident and answer and ask questions to help themselves learn and remember. In a significant minority of lessons, girls do not participate so eagerly, and teachers are not usually aware of the need to bring girls into the dialogue. Teachers rarely, except in the humanities faculty, target questions at girls. For example, in an English lesson dominated by lively boys, questions were asked of the whole class and around three-quarters of the replies were from boys.
44. In many lessons, teachers use resources well. A science lesson in which a simulation of an industrial chemical process was projected from a CD-Rom for the whole class to see, was successful in getting pupils to visualise what was happening to ammonia molecules during the reaction, and helped them to apply their understanding to the way in which the process can be slowed or speeded. Video clips are used well in history to stimulate discussion and get pupils to think about the use of evidence. In ICT, the teacher uses a newly acquired electronic whiteboard to demonstrate and illustrate different ways of approaching, for example, the design of a web page.
45. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. The specialist support to meet individual needs is good. Pupils with physical difficulties are challenged to perform physical tasks and to compete in suitable games within their own physical education lessons. This has led to them competing and winning in competitions outside college.
46. Pupils with literacy difficulties are taught well when they are withdrawn from lessons for individual support. This is carefully planned and co-ordinated, though short-term learning gains are not adequately recognised or recorded. In all subjects, teachers show good sensitivity to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

However, there is insufficient adjustment of learning materials to match individual needs, and collaboration between teachers and support assistants is not consistently well planned.

Sixth form

47. Teaching is predominantly good with very good features in many lessons. In geography, ICT and art, it is very good. Thirty-five percent of lessons seen in the sixth form were very good or excellent. Out of thirty-four lessons observed, only one was judged to be less than satisfactory. Students' learning follows a similar pattern. The strengths common to sixth-form teaching are: very good teacher knowledge and understanding of subjects and the needs of students; good planning and incorporation of challenging ideas; and very good management of students.
48. Teachers' very good knowledge of texts and the requirements of the courses of study being followed underpin learning in English. Similarly, in business education, effective teaching, backed by teachers' own business experience, have a positive effect on learning. In a lesson on distribution centres, the teacher used his experience of working in such a setting to build students' understanding. In the best mathematics lessons, teachers' command of the subject enables them to formulate questions that promote learning and isolate and correct misconceptions.
49. Teachers establish good relationships with students and expectations of effort and achievement are generally high. This results in lessons being conducted at an appropriate pace, building on prior learning. In mathematics, this was observed in a lesson on the Poisson distribution where the teacher skilfully summarised all the essential knowledge and skills required so that students could successfully tackle examination questions. In English, teachers were skilful in asking questions that not only challenged but also helped students to clarify and extend their understanding.
50. Lessons are well planned. In geography, very effective planning leads students through a topic and students learn well because teachers frequently check students' understanding. In business education, lessons and assignments are well planned to enable students to relate theory to the real world of business. Planning is good in physics, and practical investigations are used well to deepen understanding of the principles and applications of physics in the everyday world.
51. Students learn well because they have good attitudes to work. Most are keen and interested and usually concentrate well. In the good lessons in English, students are expected to think and participate in their own learning. A good example was seen when students were asked to identify the complex experiences of the central character in an extract from Faulke's 'Birdsong' and to consider how 'A Winters Tale' might be a tragic-comedy. In business studies, students are helped to develop independent learning skills through research tasks and decision-making exercises in group sessions. Similarly, in geography, students researched a case study in groups and prepared a succinct presentation on the causes and effects of deforestation.
52. Day-to-day assessment of the quality of students' learning is good. In geography, teachers mark work regularly, and clear and accurate judgements are given to help students see what they have to do to improve. This was also seen in business studies and physics.

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

Years 7 to 11

53. Since the previous inspection, time allocations have been changed so that requirements of the agreed syllabus for religious education are now met. Curriculum time for music and design and technology has been increased, and ICT is taught as a separate course for all pupils. However, there is insufficient time allowed for modern foreign languages and this is holding down standards in both French and German.
54. In science, the teaching arrangements mean that classes are usually taught by more than one teacher each week. This affects standards adversely because it makes it more difficult to track the underachievement of individual pupils. It also means that setting and marking homework are less effective.
55. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is carefully planned to meet the needs of the individual. Pupils choose from an appropriate range of courses leading to GCSE and GNVQ qualifications. A small group of pupils follow a course which does not include a modern foreign language or design and technology, but instead puts more emphasis on meeting the personal and social needs of pupils at risk of social exclusion. This course is well suited to these pupils.
56. The way courses are timetabled leads to some inequalities of opportunity. Pupils following one range of subjects cannot study food technology, and too few pupils study English literature. The opportunity to study a second modern foreign language has been undermined by the insufficient time in Years 8 and 9.
57. All pupils follow a well-planned course in personal, social and health education, which incorporates citizenship. A good feature of this course is that it is continuously modified to respond to current needs. Careers education is good. Pupils are given good, individual advice and the library with its computer information base is a useful resource that is available for pupils and parents.
58. All pupils study ICT, and opportunities to gain either a full or short GCSE, or a Certificate of Achievement, meet the needs of the whole range of ability in Year 11.
59. Pupils who are at risk of exclusion are well provided for within the teaching week. There is a very good range of additional programmes to enable them to experience different ways of working and to broaden their experience of life outside college. The Impact Programme and Crisis Response are two initiatives introduced in the last year that offer pupils a different experience if their behaviour in college has brought them near to exclusion. With teaching off-site, and with the use of less formal teaching and learning styles, they offer alternatives that are currently being carefully evaluated. In Year 9, youth workers offer a group work challenge where pupils spend a week orienteering, climbing and building trust and respect. While it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are effective in keeping some pupils in college who would otherwise not attend.
60. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are ineffective at present. Initial staff training has begun and resources have been produced but the strategies are not yet in force. However, individual pupils who have particular difficulty with reading, writing or spelling are offered well-planned support when they are withdrawn from lessons to work with a support assistant or a sixth-form student.

61. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Subjects such as design and technology, media studies and ICT offer sessions to interested pupils at lunchtimes and after college hours. There are additional sessions to develop particular skills needed in standardised tests in mathematics and English, and there is help with putting together their portfolios for GNVQ health and social care. College teams compete at football, rugby, athletics and cricket for both boys and girls, with single sex teams in basketball, netball and hockey.
62. The community makes a very good contribution to learning. The community drama programme offers opportunities for pupils to take part in activities with local people aged between seven and twenty. It is very well supported by around 150 pupils and students from the college, and plays an important part in the life of the local community. Productions are imaginative, inventive and show a high degree of sophistication in their use of dramatic techniques. There are links with agencies such as community education, the police and Durham Youth Enterprise, as well as local voluntary groups. The success of the group has been recognised by a series of awards, including the Sheriff's Award, and a Neighbourhood Watch Award. As well as confronting issues about drugs, crime and stress, pupils are able to get involved in fund raising and publicity.
63. There are very good relationships with partner institutions. Within the Sports Action Zone, there has been a high level of collaboration between teachers in the local secondary schools and colleagues in local primary schools. Having established a working relationship, there are now plans to monitor existing skills and plan for more strategic development of sport across all of the local schools. There has also been a carefully planned strategy to help maintain standards as pupils transfer from primary to secondary school. Teachers from both phases have been working together to build closer links between the content and styles of learning in Years 6 and 7 and arranging joint activities in sports and drama. Older pupils are supported by higher education institutions when the University of Sunderland provides guidance for Year 9 on 'What is University?' Pupils in Year 11 look at 'Breaking into Higher Education' within their personal, social and health education course, and there are good links with Bishop Auckland College to support continued learning after school.
64. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and the specialist support for pupils is very good. Pupils with physical difficulties have access to the whole curriculum and the high level of care and support, from both adults and other pupils, means they can take full advantage of this. Those with literacy difficulties receive help that is thoughtfully adjusted to meet their changing levels of need. There is very good support for the children of traveller families which enables them to be well integrated in class and around the college.

Personal development

65. Although there is no coherent plan to identify moments of spiritual development within each specific subject, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on wider issues than everyday life. In geography, there are good opportunities for pupils to consider their own worth and to develop their self-esteem, and in religious education, pupils consider the existence of God, as well as study of the parables and miracles.
66. The community drama project repeatedly challenges pupils' assumptions about the nature of their existence – exploring attitudes to issues such as racism, bereavement and domestic violence. Apart from this, however, there are few opportunities to consider the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society.

67. The college provides opportunities to meet writers and artists. Art and design provides good opportunities for cultural development – considering Arctic and African art, as well as arranging visits to art galleries and workshops with artists in residence. Geography enables pupils to consider the effects of tourism in the United Kingdom and abroad in locations such as Italy and Majorca. There is also scope to consider cultural heritage in history lessons that covers the local mining industry. There are strong links with Europe, both through joint projects using e-mail to discuss violence in schools, and through group residential visits and individual cultural exchanges with Holland, France and Hungary. Similar links exist with South Africa and Romania.
68. There are clear values based on respect and caring for the individual. Teachers provide very good role models so that pupils are clearly aware of the principles that distinguish right from wrong. The effect of this approach is seen very clearly in the consideration and respect afforded to pupils who have special educational needs – such that they are very well integrated into all aspects of college life. Assemblies, tutorial periods and the personal, social and health education course all provide planned opportunities to consider moral issues such as the ‘throw away society’ and materialism. English pupils in Year 8 considered questions of debt and honour when they read ‘The Pied Piper’, and in religious education there is very good provision as pupils consider family, relationships and prejudice from a multi-faith standpoint.
69. The good provision for social development shows in the way that pupils relate to each other and the way that they exercise personal and community responsibility. Sixth-form students work with pupils with special educational needs to help them to develop literacy skills; pupils following the modified curriculum in Year 10 are developing their own business enterprise growing plants for sale, and are seeking their own funds to pay for outdoor pursuits activities. Some members of the community drama group have led training sessions in drug awareness for their peers, whilst others contribute to police authority working groups on young people’s issues.

Sixth form

70. Considering the small size of the sixth form, a good range of subjects is offered to students. The college tries very hard to match students’ aspirations with the courses provided.
71. Students are able to follow AS- and A-levels in 13 subjects and others have been timetabled in previous years depending on staffing and numbers opting. Vocational courses are available in business education, health and social care and leisure and tourism. There are also positive links with the local college, and these extend students’ choice. A general studies course is offered as an option at AS-level. The key skills of communication, numeracy and computing are provided. There are no separate religious education lessons in the sixth form, with the exception of a module in the general studies course and, as all students do not take this, the college is not meeting statutory requirements to provide religious education to all sixth-form students.
72. In addition to their academic studies, students have the opportunity to participate in a good range of other activities. Despite a number of students indicating on the student questionnaire that enrichment activities were limited, the inspection team judged that for a small sixth form they were good. They include work experience, community work and visits in this country and abroad. Sixth-form students are members of the college council and have the opportunity to help staff in tutorials in the main college, and in the paired reading scheme. There is a good range of drama and sporting activities. In the

tutorial hour held weekly, students discuss and gain experience of a range of social, cultural and moral issues.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

73. This is a college where the individual needs of its pupils are paramount. All pupils are valued and the pastoral care they receive is a strength of the college.
74. The educational and personal support and guidance that pupils receive are very good. Form tutors stay with their group throughout their time in the main college. This provides an opportunity for a constructive working partnership to be established between pupil, tutor and head of year. The transition from primary school to secondary school is effective. Pupils in Year 7 settle quickly and feel well supported in their early days in college. They particularly appreciate the Year 10 'buddies' allocated to tutor groups.
75. The college is well supported by external agencies such as the behaviour support team, youth workers and the educational service for travelling children. The youth worker runs reward groups for pupils who have achieved success, such as improved attitudes towards their studies. These are highly valued by pupils and contribute significantly to raising their self-esteem.
76. The careers guidance pupils receive throughout their time at college is very good and prepares them well for both subject choices in Year 9 and post-16 choices. The personal, social and health education course is of a high standard. It is focused on, and successfully addresses, current local social issues by working in partnership with community organisations. Issues such as sexual health and teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol have recently been addressed.
77. Monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. Heads of year have overall responsibility for monitoring their year group. They receive academic information about their year group twice a year. Currently this information is provided as an interim report and a fuller annual report. Year 11 pupils who are not performing well are identified and support offered. Teaching staff volunteer to mentor these pupils and help them with their preparation for external examinations. The college feels this is effective but has not yet evaluated it.
78. Despite poor attendance, the procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. The college has a constant battle to ensure that all its pupils attend college regularly. Social inclusion funding has been used well to set up the learning support unit where pupils who have been absent for a period are effectively reintegrated through a planned programme of work. The unit operates alongside the resource centre for pupils with physical difficulties. Services range from a successful bridge back to college for pupils who have been absent for a long time, to individual support for pupils who may be finding it difficult to cope in class. Sometimes this support provides a regular breathing space – for example to enable a boy from the traveller community to keep on top of his work and so avoid conflicts which he was unable to manage. Alternatively, the centre manager may provide temporary help for a pupil whose health prevents regular attendance in all lessons. The centre is calm and welcoming and succeeds in meeting a wide range of needs.
79. Working in partnership with the education welfare service, the college has been successful with several pupils who previously hardly attended college. Not only is academic work given to help these pupils rejoin the main college but their vulnerability in a social context is also addressed. A range of strategies, such as first-day phone calls

and weekly meetings between the heads of year and education welfare officer, are helping to increase overall levels of attendance. Through specific grants, the college funds an additional educational welfare officer for two and a half days a week to support their work. Good and improving attendance is rewarded through a range of initiatives such as dry slope skiing and other activities as well as certificates. The college works hard to ensure that all pupils receive a reward to recognise their efforts in improved attendance.

80. The college's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour around the college are good. The need to have a consistent approach to behaviour management has been identified and guidelines have been issued after consultation with staff. There are clear guidelines on what constitutes acceptable behaviour that pupils know and understand. The majority comply but there are a number of pupils with challenging behaviour and the college works in partnership with the education psychologist and behaviour support team to support these pupils. Initiatives, such as anger management groups, have been used to help pupils come to terms with and manage their behaviour. Although the college follows the correct procedures for the exclusion of pupils, no analysis is carried out to see whether particular groups of pupils are being excluded, or for identifying trends in poor behaviour. Information about incidents of poor behaviour and exclusion is not recorded on a central database.
81. Respect for others is effectively addressed in assemblies, personal, social and health education and through many subjects where the impact of pupils' actions on others is also discussed. Pupils say that bullying is quickly dealt with and they appreciate the system in which pupils in Year 10 have been trained as anti-bullying counsellors. Incidents of bullying are not centrally recorded. This would enable senior management to be aware of the frequency of occurrence of these.
82. Arrangements for child protection are excellent. The nominated person is fully trained. All staff are trained and have a copy of the procedures to follow. Appropriate procedures are in place for children in the care of the local authority.
83. Pupils with special educational needs are very well cared for. Pupils with physical difficulties are fully integrated into almost every aspect of college life. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities within the college and each of them is fully integrated. A larger number of pupils from the traveller community have their own very effective support service. The college has started to identify pupils who are designated gifted or talented, but there is little evidence yet of any special provision.
84. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory overall but there are strengths and weaknesses in the system.

Strengths

- There is good, day-to-day assessment, including marking, in history, geography, ICT, physical education, religious education, business studies and health and social care.
- Records for the whole college are kept centrally.
- Pupils are tested in Years 7 and 9 using nationally recognised tests in order to measure progress and set targets.
- Pupils with special educational needs are tested regularly.
- Most teachers use National Curriculum grades in marking and pupils know which level they are working at.

Weaknesses

- Marking is inconsistent and overall unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. Even though pupils know their National Curriculum grades and targets, they are not given guidance about how to improve those grades.
 - Even where marking is satisfactory, for example in English and modern foreign languages, some teachers mark more carefully than others.
 - Although records of assessments are collated centrally, they are not produced in a form that is helpful for teachers. Class teachers have to trawl through the data in order to find the information they need. The college is not making best use of the computer program for managing assessment information and there is at present no one with an oversight of the whole process.
 - Target setting for test and examination results is based on a lot of information and the college has not decided on the best use of this information. This leads to targets for GCSE that are too high in English and too low in mathematics.
 - The progress of pupils from minority groups is not evaluated separately, and the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs do not have sufficiently clear targets for pupils' progress towards them to be measured accurately.
85. The recent appointment of an assistant headteacher with responsibility for assessment is a constructive move towards improving the effectiveness, the collection and use of information about assessment.

Sixth form

Assessment

86. In individual subjects and across the sixth form as a whole, procedures to assess students' learning are effective. The use of this information to plan lessons and the curriculum contributes to students' good achievement. Judgements are based on a large survey of students' written work and on lesson observations conducted during the inspection
87. Marking in most subjects is thorough and assessments are accompanied by helpful written and oral comments. In business education, careful marking and assessments of work are carried out and are helpful to students to enable them to improve their work. In physics however, while classroom assessment is good, there is not always enough written advice to indicate how students could improve or pursue further study. In mathematics, marking and assessment vary both in frequency and detail. There are some inaccuracies in grading students' work as the connection between how well a student is performing in relation to A-level grades is not always clear.
88. There are regular opportunities for parents and students to meet teachers to discuss progress. Parents are quite happy about this aspect of college life. Students' views of the college are positive. The college selected a large sample of students for interview and others held conversations with subject inspectors so that their views could be considered. A significant majority was very positive about the teaching and care they receive. They are impressed by the way the college tries so hard to meet their needs and aspirations. Where there were concerns expressed in the questionnaire, they were clarified in interviews. Students were particularly positive about the ways in which they are helped to settle in the sixth form, the accessibility of teachers for help and the way in which they are informed about progress.

Advice, support and guidance

89. The college has very good procedures for ensuring students' safety and welfare. Pastoral and academic support is good because there are many points of contact between staff and students. Students find the regular, half-termly reviews with their tutors particularly helpful and effective. There is also generally good advice and support from staff. In a number of subjects, additional support is provided in voluntary workshop sessions. While these are well attended in geography, some students do not take full advantage of the opportunities provided elsewhere. More stringent procedures and guidance are required to improve punctuality and attendance at registrations, tutorials and in some lessons.
90. A relatively small percentage stays on into the sixth form; just under half in the last year. Approximately a third go on to some form of higher education with the remainder going straight into employment. The college and the careers service provide regular and effective career advice and support. This is an appropriate provision although some of the students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that more should be done for them.
91. There is an effective induction programme after the GCSE examinations in Year 11 that prepares students well for sixth-form work. Students are very appreciative of this guidance. They acknowledge the full and constructive advice given to them in relation to their choice of courses, the way they are helped to settle down quickly in the sixth form and the quality of information they receive on their progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

92. Seventeen parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and 34 per cent of parents completed the questionnaire on parents' views. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting had no significant concerns about the college and almost all their comments were positive. They felt their children were making good progress and the college has high expectations. They felt comfortable about approaching the college if there were any difficulties. They were particularly complimentary about the range of after-college activities that were available.
93. Links with parents are good. Pastoral staff ensure that regular and frequent contact is established with parents of pupils who are causing concern. The education welfare service and education service for travelling children play an important role in liaising between home and college. The quality of information provided for parents about the progress of their child is good. Interim reports enable parents to be clear about what their child's predicted grades are in external examinations and how they are achieving in relation to them. The quality of annual reports has improved since the previous inspection and an annual target-setting day gives parents and pupils an individual opportunity to review progress over the last year with the form tutor. This is an effective way of involving parents in the education of their children. Parents of pupils in Year 11 attend a post-16 options evening.
94. The Friends of the School, composed mainly of parents, actively support the college in many ways. Recently they consulted parents about their views on the newly introduced consultation days. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is satisfactory. They support college functions and attendance at the newly introduced review interviews is very high at 90 per cent. Most parents see that both homework and coursework are completed to meet deadlines but there is a significant number who do not ensure their child attends college regularly.

95. Most willingly collaborate with the college to resolve difficulties when they occur. They are involved in the drawing up and review of pastoral support plans for example. Parents of children with special educational needs are appropriately involved with their individual education plans and annual reviews. Parents are encouraged to share in all the decisions about meeting pupils' special educational needs. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that parents are appropriately informed of the help that their children need, and the progress that they are making.
96. Parents are happy with the guidance and support given by staff in the sixth form. Reports are good and provide guidance on how a student can improve standards of work. Comments were made that the amount of information that students and parents receive about levels of attainment and targets to improve has increased in recent years. They particularly appreciate the achievement nights, when progress can be discussed with teachers.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

97. The college is very well led by the dynamic headteacher and his senior management team. This effective and optimistic leadership produces a strong sense of teamwork among staff and pupils. The recent appointment of a number of enthusiastic staff to key posts such as ICT, English and assistant headteacher has strengthened the team further. Teachers feel that their ideas are heard and respected, and that they are part of a successful enterprise.
98. Falling rolls mean that some difficult decisions have had to be taken by senior managers and governors, and this has been done wisely and without loss of morale. Only in modern foreign languages has the loss of staff led to a less effective curriculum.
99. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the nature of the college and of his pupils and students. He is energetic in the pursuit of funds and initiatives to support individuals and groups of pupils with particular needs. The senior management is alert to the need to manage these different projects efficiently and prevent overlap of provision. Heads of year have responsibility for tracking the progress of individual pupils and monitoring the effectiveness of the different support given to each. They manage these well and, coupled with the sensitivity of the managers of different projects, they see that pupils are placed on the most appropriate scheme.
100. The leadership sees as one of its most important functions the raising of achievement of all its pupils whatever their backgrounds. All staff are aware of this and have been given training, for example on the culture of travellers. The college has shown very good initiative by developing a number of unusual curriculum projects that have attracted additional funds. The Comenius Project supports collaboration with schools in other European countries, and the 'Excellence in Clusters' programme provides support for learning and behaviour of pupils living in particularly deprived areas.
101. The leadership works very effectively with the community facility housed on the college campus. On the advice of the headteacher, the chair of the Community Association has joined the governing body and this has strengthened the useful links from which the college benefits. For example, the college has the use of some of the Community premises in college hours, and the Community Association manages classes, for example in ICT, that the college puts on for adults, primarily parents, in the evenings. As well as these material benefits, the college has the added advantage that parents who come to classes in the evening are familiar with the college and, for some, this helps overcome an initial reluctance to visit.

102. Systems for monitoring the work of the college are satisfactory and improving. Senior staff and heads of department carry out lesson observations systematically, and a number of measures have been taken successfully to improve the quality of teaching. However, some of the monitoring reports are too bland and descriptive. These do not identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses clearly enough. A system for monitoring by looking at pupils' work started this year but has not been in action long enough to reveal inconsistencies in marking. Following the changes and improvements in teaching over the last three years, the college is now in a position to spread good practice within and beyond departments, but this is not yet happening widely.
103. Most departments are well managed. Development planning is done systematically, with the support of governors, and priorities are appropriate. Departments plan effectively and in English and ICT, the recently appointed heads of department have transformed their departments. Both now have targets that are ambitious, but given the careful and imaginative planning, they are realistic. In mathematics, targets are not ambitious enough.
104. Departments are given autonomy to devise and implement policies for managing the way pupils' work is assessed, and for ensuring pupils behave in lessons. While this works well in most departments, there is some inconsistency in teachers' expectations, both of work and behaviour. For example, there is no marking policy in science, and pupils' written work, and the way teachers mark it, is not monitored closely enough. In English lessons, some teachers demand a greater degree of commitment from pupils than others.
105. The governors are well informed and take an active part in the college's management. Since the previous inspection when the governors were criticised, they have instituted an intensive training programme and forged closer links with the staff. An effective system for linking governors to departments means that each governor comes to know the college well and the whole governing body is in a good position to evaluate plans and make appointments.
106. The weakest area of management is the system to collate and use the information from assessing pupils' progress in all subjects throughout the year. At present, the information is not held in a form that is easy for teachers to use, and this is partly because several teachers have responsibility for different aspects of assessment, and no one person has a clear overview.
107. Financial planning is good, and governors are fully involved in this challenging task. Falling numbers, both in the main college and in the sixth form, together with the temporary nature of some of the college's funding, makes strategic planning both essential and difficult. The college's well-prepared, three-year planning cycle, which takes account of best and worst case situations, is effective in keeping the college's budget in line, maintaining staff morale and enabling the college to go ahead with the initiatives that benefit its pupils and students.
108. The college monitors the effectiveness of initiatives where possible, but some are too recent to evaluate reliably yet. There are measurable targets set for the Key Stage 3 strategy³ that will enable its effectiveness to be monitored at the end of this academic year.

³ A national initiative to raise standards of numeracy and literacy in Years 7 to 9

109. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical difficulties, is well managed. Statutory duties are properly carried out, and the resources and support staff are effectively deployed to meet pupils' needs. However, the targets are not always sufficiently clearly focused or measurable, nor is it clear when achievement of these targets is to be assessed, and which teachers are responsible for making the assessments. Consequently, estimates of progress made by individual pupils are inexact, and the college has no clear picture about how effectively their spending benefits pupils. The special needs co-ordinator has the equivalent of one day per week to manage the provision, but this involves liaison with a large range of external agencies, as well as completing the statutory paperwork. Consequently, the effectiveness of strategies to support individual pupils is not properly monitored.
110. For most subjects, there are sufficient, qualified staff to cover the demands of the curriculum. However, there are serious deficiencies in music and modern foreign languages, where the college has had difficulty recruiting staff. Music does not currently have a permanent specialist teacher. Modern foreign languages do not have sufficient staff to deliver the full curriculum, and the college has also not employed modern language assistants which affects standards in speaking and listening. All staff are confident in using ICT, and this has improved since the previous inspection.
111. The planning and management of the induction and training of newly qualified teachers is very good. Staff development is efficiently organised, with clear priorities, which relate to the college's planned development, and to department and individual needs. Teacher appraisal has improved since the time of the last inspection and meets current requirements. The college still retains the nationally recognised 'Investor in People' award.
112. The overall quality of the college buildings is good. The buildings are well kept and clean, and the good standards of cleanliness and care, provided by the caretaker and cleaning staff, maintain a pleasant, functional environment. The public areas are well organised, with displays which reflect the positive ethos of the college and aspects of its work. The new buildings and adaptations of one of the older buildings enhance the attractive site, which has considerably improved the accommodation since the time of the last report. Good sports facilities include an all-weather cricket pitch and a small, multi-purpose, artificial pitch. Indoor facilities include two squash courts, a bowling green and two gymnasiums. The community also uses many of these facilities.
113. The outdoor pitches and other hard play areas are of poor quality and are in desperate need of improvement. They are seriously affected by the proximity of vandalised buildings.
114. All subjects make good use of their resources, which are very good in business studies, and good in geography, history and ICT, where the proportion of computers to pupils is high. Music resources are unsatisfactory and there are deficiencies in art and design and design and technology.
115. The library was not in use at the time of the last report due to the ongoing building works. It is attractive and well stocked with fiction, which should encourage pupils to read, although there is a poor stock of non-fiction books. It now provides a multimedia resource for personal study, and the library benefits from a loan system from the county. The librarian is committed to encouraging pupils to read. However, the numbers of books borrowed is extremely low, notwithstanding her considerable efforts. The library is used very well by pupils, who focus almost entirely on the computer facilities and not on books.

116. The resources to support pupils with special educational needs are grouped together on the college site so that, at breaks and lunchtimes, pupils with a wide range of needs, along with their friends, tend to congregate in that area. This situation has helped to develop a caring and supportive atmosphere where all pupils are welcomed regardless of their ability or need.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

117. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The headteacher and staff with responsibility for the sixth form provide very good leadership at all levels. Parents and students value the approach and the beneficial changes made since the appointment of the headteacher.
118. Staff with delegated management responsibility, for example the senior management team, the head of sixth form and tutors, and most subject departments' team leaders, fulfil their roles well. In some subjects, for example business education, geography, English, physical education and media studies, leadership is very good. There is good team spirit and commitment to improve standards within departments. In mathematics, however, teachers do not formally share good practice and there is inadequate monitoring of teaching and subsequent learning. There is currently an acting head of sixth form following the appointment of the previous holder to a post in another college. He is continuing to carry out the procedures and policies established by his predecessor in a very efficient and hard working manner.
119. Governors are supportive of the college and the sixth form. They fail to fulfil their statutory duty to provide religious education for all students in line with the requirements of the Durham Agreed Syllabus.
120. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum, both in experience and qualifications, is very good. The provision for physics teaching is particularly good as there are two teachers qualified to teach a subject that many colleges find hard to resource.
121. Learning resources are satisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. In business education, they are very good, with particularly good ICT resources. Students generally expressed the view that computers are now always available to them. Accommodation for sixth-form subjects is good. The sixth-form common room meets current needs and there are places in the college reserved for sixth-form private study.
122. The senior management has carried out a statistical analysis on the cost effectiveness of the sixth form. Currently it is not cost effective, as a result of the low numbers; subsequently it has to draw down a subsidy from the main college. The college is aware of the need to raise numbers to widen choice for students and for the sixth form to become cost effective, and provisional numbers for next year suggest that numbers will rise. A few more students joining existing classes would make the sixth form cost-effective. The inspection team judged that the sixth form is providing a satisfactory education for students.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

123. In order to raise the standards of attainment and attendance the governors and management should:

- (1) Raise standards of literacy across the college, and mathematics results in Year 11 by:
 - increasing the time pupils spend reading; (paragraphs 115, 139, 142, 228)
 - implementing the Key Stage 3 strategy as it affects standards of literacy across the college in order to improve pupils' spelling and syntax; (paragraphs 11, 12, 60, 132, 133, 138, 139, 141, 142, 180, 182, 194, 195, 198, 228, 241, 255, 274)
 - improving pupils' speaking skills by providing more structured opportunities to speak, through such activities as group work; (paragraphs 27, 39, 139, 228)
 - raising standards in mathematics in Year 11 by setting more ambitious targets and encouraging pupils to reach them. (paragraphs 17, 103, 145)
- (2) Raise the attainment of girls by ensuring that teachers do not allow boys to dominate in lessons, by making sure questions in lessons are directed to girls as well as boys, and by investigating and implementing teaching practices such as small group discussions, that are known to motivate girls. (paragraphs 2, 5, 13, 19, 37, 43, 128, 135, 136, 147, 150, 158, 159, 161, 244, 246, 262)
- (3) Raise standards in music, particularly in Years 7 to 9, by appointing a music specialist. (paragraphs 18 110)
- (4) Raise standards in modern foreign languages by increasing the teaching time in all years. (paragraphs 9, 225, 226, 229)
- (5) Make assessment and target setting more consistent and effective by:
 - improving the quality of marking and day-to-day assessment so that pupils know what they have to do to improve; (paragraphs 84, 102, 104, 136, 151, 153, 156, 168)
 - bringing together the different headings and responsibilities for assessment and target setting in order to determine what information is needed, how it is to be collected and analysed and seeing that this analysis is given to staff in a form that is easy to use. (paragraphs 84, 106, 156, 188, 198, 208, 263, 244)
- (6) Improving attendance by continuing with the already strenuous efforts, and emphasising even more strongly to parents the importance of making sure their children attend college regularly. (paragraph 194)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve procedures to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality by establishing a more rigorous registration system for sixth formers. (paragraphs 35, 89, 284)
- (2) Develop effective strategies and procedures to establish more structured provision for students' private study time. (paragraphs 33, 35)
- (3) Provide religious education for all students in line with the statutory requirements of the Durham Agreed Syllabus. (paragraph 71)

In addition to the key issues outlined above, the college and governors should consider including the following matters in its action plan.

- Although behaviour around the college is good, behaviour in a few lessons is not, and this is due to the inconsistent expectations of different teachers. It is around three years since all the staff were trained in managing pupils. (paragraphs 42, 104, 134, 266)
- In a significant number of otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers help pupils too much, and pupils are passive and do not work independently. (paragraphs 155, 244, 262)
- Curriculum and timetable planning leads to some classes being split between two or more teachers, and some pupils in Year 10 do not have a wide enough choice of design and technology courses. (paragraphs 54, 56)
- Individual education plans do not have precise enough targets. (paragraphs 84, 109)
- Part of the outdoor sports area is in urgent need of renovation. (paragraphs 113, 252)

UNIT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

124. The college includes an additional unit that is resourced to provide support for up to 13 pupils with physical difficulties so that they can be integrated within a mainstream college. The resources are located alongside the learning support unit for pupils at risk of exclusion, close to the office and accommodation for the special needs support team.
125. This is a very effective provision. Despite the proximity of an internal exclusion room for pupils who have behaved badly in lessons, the atmosphere is supportive and positive. At breaks and lunchtimes, this area offers one of many appropriate places where pupils with and without special needs can meet and talk. Support assistants and the co-ordinator for special educational needs are close at hand, and there is ready access to nursing support if it is needed.
126. The site is generally accessible, with appropriate facilities for disabled pupils, and lifts which connect to parts of the upper floors. The access is not total however, and some large classes are taught in rooms that are too small as a result. Facilities for individual physiotherapy are sufficient, and there are plans to extend this provision to meet the needs of a pupil who is expected to join the college next year. Space for small group activity as part of the physical education curriculum is not adequate and lessons are conducted in a staff room at present.
127. Support assistants are available to assist pupils to move between classes, and this is timetabled as a priority. Once this has been done, the support assistants move on to provide help for pupils with learning needs, though they do remain in classes where the pupils need help with a physical activity. This is very effectively done so that pupils with physical difficulties play an integral part in almost all aspects of college life. Individual

members of the support team are developing specialist skills to support pupils with difficulties. They are guided by visiting staff who bring an appropriate range of specialist expertise. Pupils with physical difficulties make good progress in their lessons. They frequently provide both intellectual and physical challenges for their classmates. They enjoy coming to college, and they are appreciative of the way that the college has been improved to enhance their access.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	118
	Sixth form	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils and students		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	7	25	45	36	6	1	0
Percentage	6	21	37.5	30.5	4.2	0.8	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	11	16	5	1	0	0
Percentage	2.9	32.4	47	14.8	2.9	0	0

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

Information about the college's pupils

Pupils on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the college's roll	683	91
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free college meals	246	18

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	56	
Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register	194	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last college year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	11.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	51	75	126

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	12	24	27
	Girls	25	40	36
	Total	37	64	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	29 (42)	51 (61)	50 (47)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	11 (5)	28 (25)	29 (20)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	28	19
	Girls	32	44	26
	Total	53	72	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	42 (53)	57 (53)	36 (37)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	11 (27)	25 (23)	12 (9)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	74	80	154

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	18	61	67
	Girls	24	58	73
	Total	42	119	140
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	College	27 (26)	77 (83)	91 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	College	27.7
	National	39.0

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	College	0
	National	n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	29	25	54

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	9	21	30
	Average point score per candidate	9.0	12.1	10.9
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	8	13	21	1	9	10
	Average point score per candidate	10.2	11.8	11.2	6.0	6.7	6.6

National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6
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Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	770
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	111	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	296

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	20.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,436,252
Total expenditure	2,394,833
Expenditure per pupil	3,016
Balance brought forward from previous year	86,209
Balance carried forward to next year	127,628

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	794
Number of questionnaires returned	267

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	47	46	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in college.	54	42	3	0	0
Behaviour in the college is good.	44	46	6	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	51	9	3	3
The teaching is good.	50	44	2	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	37	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	69	28	1	1	1
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	0	1
The college works closely with parents.	53	38	7	1	1
The college is well led and managed.	58	34	3	1	4
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	37	4	1	2
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	38	4	1	9

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Purposeful management.
- Positive attitudes of most pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards of attainment, especially of girls.
- Improving the accuracy of written work.
- Inconsistency in the quality of marking.

128. In 2001, results of pupils aged 14 in national tests were well below average by comparison with national standards and well below the results of similar schools and colleges. Girls achieved more highly than boys but by a much narrower margin than is found nationally. The trend of improvement in recent years has been well below the national trend. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in English at GCSE was well below average and the proportion gaining grades A*-E was below average. The percentage gaining grades A*-C in English literature matched the national average but the proportion of pupils who took the examination was unusually low by comparison with other colleges.
129. Evidence of the inspection indicates that attainment in all years continues to be below average but by less than was shown by last year's results. Standards are rising because teachers now have a clearer sense of direction and there are teaching schemes relevant to pupils' needs.
130. The range of attainment when pupils enter the college is very wide. It includes a number of pupils of high ability and some with very low attainment.
131. Standards in work seen in Year 9 are below the expectation nationally for pupils of this age and do not consistently match expectation based upon assessments made at the time of entry. However, in view of most pupils' very low starting points in Year 7, these standards represent good achievement. Pupils listen carefully to explanations by teachers and usually with good understanding, though sometimes individuals fail to ask for further clarification. Usually, pupils other than those in higher attaining groups, listen less well to each other in full-class discussions. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills in group discussions. Despite this, most pupils speak clearly and, when challenged by teachers, higher attainers can develop answers at length and provide reasons for their opinions. Pupils read aloud accurately and can use highlighting to identify important details in the text being studied. A class of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 showed confidence in exploring scenes from 'Macbeth' to judge levels of guilt and responsibility based upon their ability to read with good understanding. Most pupils, however, are dependent upon the help of teachers to gain more than superficial understanding of what they read.

132. The widest range of skill is evident in pupils' writing. A small but significant group comprising both boys and girls write to very high standards, using sophisticated vocabularies, employing a wide range of sentence constructions and making very good use of relevant illustration, whether writing creatively or analytically. Almost all are capable of writing in recognisable sentences and paragraphs, which communicate at least the main sense to an empathetic reader. The use by teachers of templates to help pupils write logically helps pupils to organise their ideas. The work of most, including some who otherwise write well, is flawed by the frequency of misspelling, especially of words in everyday use. Missing syllables from words and excessive use of capital letters, not only at the start of words, suggest limited experience of reading. Although they often use wordprocessors, pupils do not make full use of spellcheckers. Many are unsure about sentence construction and the use of full stops and apostrophes. A positive feature is that pupils with very limited language skills become increasingly willing, with encouragement from teachers, to extend their vocabularies and to communicate more clearly. Pupils who entered Year 7 this year with levels of literacy well below expectation, are withdrawn for regular specialist help as part of a national strategy and this is proving beneficial. Pupils take pride in their work and presentation is usually neat, whether hand-written or wordprocessed.
133. The balance of strengths and weaknesses is almost identical in Years 10 and 11, and again, achievement is good. Attainment in Year 11 is below average but standards are rising. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and are more attentive to each other. They speak clearly but many continue to need the assistance of teachers to develop their ideas more fully. Higher attainers read with good understanding of the main sense and a developing awareness of how writers achieve their effects. Many show good ability to organise their writing and to communicate relevantly and clearly. The lowest attainers, including those with special educational needs, make good progress because teachers understand their needs and especially when additional in-class support is available to them. In consequence, they are likely to gain grades at GCSE that seemed unlikely when they entered the college, even though their writing is often inaccurate. The middle range of attainers, which includes some with good creative writing skills, mostly have difficulties of understanding text and organising their writing without considerable assistance from teachers. Such help can improve their coursework but cannot be available in examinations. Errors of spelling of words in everyday use, faults of sentence construction and elementary grammar continue to reduce the effectiveness of the writing even of some otherwise skilful writers.
134. Teachers have to be constantly vigilant in most lessons, taking quick and effective action to keep some pupils busy and out of mischief. They are usually successful because pupils mostly have positive attitudes to their work and make good progress because they maintain concentration. They understand the purpose of the work set and benefit from the variety of activities. Even so, in several lessons, the quality of teaching and learning was reduced by the frequent need to correct a small minority of pupils. The work of the department will benefit from discussion of this feature.
135. In contrast to the situation in most colleges, girls do not attain significantly more highly than boys. The national pattern of girls outnumbering boys in higher attaining groups but boys outnumbering them in the lowest groups is reversed. Girls generally lack confidence and typically do not volunteer answers to questions or contribute to class discussions. This means that they do not practise important skills and miss opportunities to develop their understanding. The fact that pupils have few opportunities for working in small groups is likely to further disadvantage girls in particular. These differences are not evident in Year 7 where pupils of both genders contribute equally. They were not evident in one Year 9 class where a group of highly articulate girls

demonstrated originality of thinking about guilt and responsibility in 'Macbeth' and a willingness to explore evidence that at least matched the contributions of boys. Another exception was noted in a Year 10 class identifying events for inclusion in autobiographies. There is a need to review the present balance of teaching and learning styles.

136. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and the quality of teaching and learning is now good. In one in five lessons, teaching is very good and in a similar number, it is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan lessons carefully and pupils learn well because they move quickly through a series of activities towards clear targets. They explain how lessons link to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. The pace and variety of activities help pupils to maintain concentration. A strength of good and very good lessons is the use of questions to enable pupils to contribute to their learning, to confirm that they understand and to develop their understanding. Teachers have useful information about pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, so they know which individuals need additional help and encouragement. In less successful lessons, misbehaviour is not dealt with firmly enough, insufficient attention is given to girls or explanations of tasks lack clarity. The best marking of pupils' work is positive in identifying strengths and advising on the means of further improvement, but not all is of this quality.
137. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The head of department is a recent appointment. She is a good manager and is developing a good team spirit among her staff. New teaching schemes are relevant to the needs of pupils. They successfully address the criticism in the previous report that work is sometimes not challenging enough, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The changes are beginning to raise standards in lessons, but this is not yet showing in examination results. The second in department has taken on significant responsibilities. The evidence indicates that the department has the ability to raise levels of attainment.

Literacy across the curriculum

138. Standards of literacy are well below average when pupils enter the college and are below average by Year 11. The majority of pupils are unable to demonstrate effectively in writing the real quality of their knowledge and understanding in many subjects and this affects their attainment in national tests and examinations.
139. The major difficulties experienced are in reading with understanding and writing with clarity and accuracy. Pupils make too many mistakes in spelling, especially of words in everyday use, such as confusing 'their' and 'there'. They omit syllables especially at the end of words and some confuse capital and lower case letters. Sentences and direct speech are often poorly punctuated.
140. The college makes good provision for pupils with very low levels of literacy. Teachers know their problems and targets for improvement are set for them. Learning support assistants and others provide valuable help within lessons, though this help is not always available when needed. Some pupils are withdrawn for specialist help and in Year 7 this is part of the new national strategy. The college is careful to provide some alternative courses for older pupils with severe difficulties and makes special arrangements in examinations for those with specific learning difficulties or those for whom physical difficulties cause problems of writing. The resource centre attracts pupils who wish to use computers but the level of borrowing of books is very low.

141. All teachers participated in a training day last October so that they might be prepared for the implementation of the new national strategy to extend the literacy development work now provided in primary schools into secondary schools and colleges. The college has produced some appropriate materials but its policy has not yet been put into practice. Departmental documents do not include plans to contribute to the raising of standards.
142. Currently there is evidence of some good practice in some subjects. Most encourage pupils to learn and use words relevant to the topics being studied and generally insist, with clear evidence of success, that they spell them correctly. In subjects such as art and design, design and technology, English, history and geography, pupils are encouraged to write at length and are given guidance on how to organise their material. Opportunities for discussion in groups are provided in geography and some lessons in design and technology and history but only occasionally elsewhere. Opportunities for reading aloud and hearing teachers read were noted only in English, history and religious education. There is need to develop clear strategies for improving literacy with the support of all subjects, including encouragement to read both for information and for pleasure.

Drama and media studies

143. All pupils study drama in Year 7, and media studies is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Drama is a popular choice, particularly among pupils taking the vocationally-biased curriculum, who are encouraged to follow the course by the high profile of community drama based in the college, and which involves around 150 pupils from the college, as well as children from primary schools and adults.
144. By Year 11, pupils can improvise and communicate effectively, and use techniques such as freeze frames confidently. They understand the principles of characterisation and work with intense concentration when improvising. Teaching is effective and enables pupils to communicate messages clearly and dramatically. For example, Year 11 pupils responded thoughtfully to challenging themes, such as drink driving, bullying and rail disasters. Sensitive teaching enabled all pupils to grow in confidence although some had difficulty projecting their voices strongly enough. GCSE results vary considerably from year to year but, in terms of pupils' overall levels of attainment, represent good achievement.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching.
- Results in National Curriculum tests have improved over the last four years.

Areas for improvement

- There is some underachievement in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality of marking and assessment varies and procedures do not include short-term student targets to identify underachievement.
- The monitoring of teaching does not make use of the many examples of individual good practice.
- There is no whole-college strategy to promote numeracy skills.

145. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below the national average. Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 in relation to their standards when they joined the college is satisfactory, reflecting some recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum. A significant proportion of students who reached national average levels at the end of their Year 9 underperformed in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, and partly because some have undemanding targets, they obtained GCSE results that are below those that would normally be expected and their achievement was unsatisfactory.
146. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests show an improving trend since the previous inspection. Results in 2001 were well below the national average, having been below, rather than well below, in the previous three years. The results are in line with those achieved by pupils in similar colleges. Boys consistently produce higher results than girls and by a greater margin than that seen nationally. Both boys' and girls' mathematics results are higher than their English results but lower than their science test results.
147. In work seen during the inspection, current Year 9 pupils demonstrate satisfactory levels of proficiency in work with number, shape and statistics and higher attainers are given more demanding work, mainly in algebra. They cope well with arithmetic and read tables and graphs accurately. Lower attainers identify different shapes and use arithmetic accurately to calculate areas and they distinguish between rotational and line symmetry. Poor recall of basic facts sometimes limits attainment and some higher attainers lack confidence with the simplification and manipulation of algebraic terms.
148. GCSE results are well below the national average and have changed little since the last inspection. In general, both boys and girls do less well in their mathematics examinations than in their other subjects. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, although boys attained higher results than the girls, the difference was much smaller than in previous years and their results were much closer than those they obtained in their Year 9 National Curriculum tests.
149. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below the national average and higher than indicated by examination and test results. Recent curriculum improvements, including the progressive revision of teaching schemes that reflect the National Numeracy Strategy, have not been in place long enough to be fully reflected in students' work. They are having an increasing impact on standards because of improved teaching and better numeracy skills of pupils when they enter the college.
150. In some lessons, the boys dominate and this sometimes results in girls becoming passive learners. In these instances, this exacerbates the difficulty many pupils have with articulating their understanding and learning.
151. Teaching has improved since the last report. Teaching and learning seen in lessons during the inspection were satisfactory overall and ranged from satisfactory to very good. This is leading to satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9. However, unambitious target setting for GCSE means that the effectiveness of the teaching in these years has been unsatisfactory for a significant number of pupils in the current Years 10 and 11. These pupils have not been challenged enough in the past. Recent changes in the department have brought about some improvement but there is a legacy of undemanding work that has led to significant underachievement in these two years.
152. Classroom organisation and the management of pupils are particular strengths of teaching. Pupils with special needs, and particularly some with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are sensitively integrated into the mainstream so that there is no

discernible difference in their performances compared with their peers. A common feature of the relationships in lessons is the due respect shown by pupils to one another when asking and answering questions or working in pairs. All the teachers have a good command of the subject and the best teachers use this knowledge to frame questions and explanations in a way that pupils' learning is achieved through understanding. In the better lessons this skill is effectively used in teasing out points, often via incorrect responses, without making things too easy for the pupils by readily giving them the answers as well as the questions.

153. The marking and tracking of pupils' work and progress are additional strengths with some, but not all, teachers. These teachers have levels of expectation that raise the sights of pupils, and consequently pupils' learning in their lessons is at least satisfactory and often good. For example, an average to below average attaining group of Year 11 pupils were able to confidently factorise algebraic expressions because the teacher's level of expectation was higher than indicated by predicted performance.
154. In the very good lessons, the pace is brisk because the teacher sets realistic time limits for the completion of a variety of tasks, and structures the work to ensure that consolidation is accompanied by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. For example, a group of Year 8 pupils, with only three working at expected levels for their age, was fully engaged with the teacher in systematically acquiring the skills required to apply the four rules of number to negative numbers and substitution. The teacher radiated infectious enthusiasm and this resulted in a very brisk, challenging pace. The work catered for individual pupil's needs and there was an appropriate balance between allowing pupils to work independently and giving help. The teacher's high expectations of both behaviour and effort resulted in average and below average attainers being motivated to achieve well. By the end of the lesson, all the pupils, including a quarter of the group with various special needs, had a good grasp of the processes and were attaining standards in excess of their assessed targets. Further examples of good practice include the use of introductory 'warm-up', mental arithmetic exercises and ICT to engender interest in rehearsing basic number skills. However, provision is not consistent and varies from teacher to teacher. The use of ICT, though developing, is not yet having a significant impact on all pupils' progress in mathematics.
155. In less successful lessons, there is insufficient dialogue between the teacher and pupils. Consequently, there is a lack of enthusiasm, and learning is largely the rehearsal of prior knowledge without adequately extending knowledge and skills. Although the teachers' explanations have clarity, the pupils are passive and therefore not required to make the necessary intellectual effort that would raise their level of performance. For example, a group of average attaining Year 10 pupils, having established that they had the necessary geometry construction skills to deal with straightforward examples, were not provided with more searching questions that would exercise their interest and foster a desire to achieve more. Consequently, concentration and interest declined in the final stages of the lesson and the opportunity was missed to turn a satisfactory lesson into a good one.
156. The organisation of the subject is satisfactory and there is a supportive ethos in the team of teachers delivering the mathematics curriculum. Overall, improvements since the last inspection are just satisfactory, but standards are not yet high enough. The monitoring and directional roles of the head of department are not rigorous enough to ensure that the good practices that exist within the team are being shared and used. For example, there are variations in the marking and assessment of work so that the potential for using assessment information and target setting to raise standards and aspirations is not always being realised.

Numeracy across the curriculum

157. Pupils successfully employ a range of numeracy skills in many subjects and there are several examples of their skills enhancing learning. Datahandling skills are competently used in geography and business studies when pupils construct various statistical graphs to illuminate and analyse information, particularly for their fieldwork. In science, students construct graphs from experiments and show that they are at ease using extrapolation, but the application of numeracy skills is limited and does not extend to transforming formulae. In history, new units of work make far greater use of numerical data than typically seen and opportunities are used well to heighten interest by involving data and calculations. Overall, pupils' numeracy skills are sufficient to make a positive contribution to their learning in subjects across the curriculum. The college is in the early stages of introducing a systematic and co-ordinated whole- college approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum. At present, individual departments do not have a strategy for promoting the use of numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Improving examination and test results, particularly in the last two years.
- Since the last inspection, a marked improvement in the quality of scientific investigations.

Areas for improvement

- The standard and consistency of marking across the department.
- Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, which has not improved since the last inspection.
- Strategies to raise the attainment of girls.

158. Standards in national tests are rising and reflect the work of the department since the last inspection. For the last three years, the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the National Curriculum level expected for their age by the end of Year 9 has increased each year with a 20 per cent rise in the last two years. Compared to all schools and colleges nationally, these results are below the national average. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher grades and the proportion is now in line with all schools and colleges nationally. When compared to similar schools and colleges based on those eligible for free college meals, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level and above is in line and for the higher grades, is well above. Over the last four years, while there has been an improvement overall, girls' results have been consistently below those of boys. However, the gap has narrowed in the last two years.

159. GCSE standards are also improving but not to such an extent as those in Years 7 to 9. There has been a gradual increase since the last inspection in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C, but it is still below that expected nationally. With the exception of one year, girls have attained fewer of the higher grades in double award than boys. Since 1998, pupils have been able to take single award science as an alternative to double award. The first results for single award were in 2000. Whilst pupils have not attained any of the higher grades A*-C in either year, the proportion of those attaining a pass grade A*-G has increased by almost 20 per cent. In the same period in double award there has been a 13 per cent increase in the percentage of pupils

attaining the higher grades. Results in 2001 were just below all schools and colleges nationally, and all pupils entered attained a pass grade.

160. Standards in lessons reflect those attained in examination and test results. In many lessons, pupils are attaining below national expectations. These are often the lower groups. In GCSE single award, while pupils could identify a group of metals by their symbols and describe how their reactivity varied, they could not relate this different reactivity to the structure of the atoms. In double award, there was evidence of attainment both above and below national expectations. In one Year 11 group, only a minority attained above national expectations. They could explain how the amount of ammonia produced depends on changing the temperature and pressure of the gases in the reaction. In the top group in the same year, pupils could explain how an alternating current is produced with a magnet and a coil. They could describe the relationship between the number of turns in the coil and the current produced. Both of these are above national expectations. Up to the end of Year 9, there is also variation in the standards pupils attain. In one lower group in Year 9, while pupils could name the organs responsible for breathing, they could not describe what these organs do and this would be expected nationally at this point. However, the top group in Year 8 could explain how coloured objects are seen in different coloured light.
161. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in most lessons and achievement is satisfactory overall. However, there is evidence of underachievement by different groups, particularly girls. Strategies to involve girls more in lessons are often not present and so girls lack the self-confidence to answer questions. They are also given insufficient opportunities to discuss their ideas with one another or in mixed gender groups.
162. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress. Teachers of each group know them well and often match the activity to their individual needs. This includes easily read worksheets and templates to help them organise their writing, and represents a definite improvement since the last inspection. These pupils are well supported by non-teaching assistants who help to keep them focused on their work. Those pupils with physical difficulties achieve in line with able-bodied pupils and particularly when supported in practical lessons as, when in a practical chemistry lesson, they were able to identify metals by flame tests. There are a few traveller children in college. One Year 7 boy achieved well when learning about separation techniques and was eager to answer the teacher's questions despite missing several weeks at the start of the college year.
163. Learning below that expected occurs when teachers do not make sufficient demands of pupils and present them with undemanding tasks such as cutting and pasting or copying notes. However, when teachers set high expectations and present pupils with tasks that are challenging but attainable for their ability, then satisfactory progress is made. In a Year 9 set, many pupils with special needs achieved well because the teacher challenged them to design their own results chart using previous knowledge.
164. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good or very good. Most lessons are well planned, and pupils know what they should be learning because teachers always share the aims of the lessons with pupils. Practical activities enable pupils to maintain interest throughout. There were a few unsatisfactory lessons owing to poor planning and inefficient use of time. In the better lessons, teachers use different ways to reinforce and develop pupils' understanding.

165. Often teachers do not challenge pupils to think for themselves or take responsibility for their own learning and here there has been no improvement since the last inspection. Teachers often talk for long periods and give few opportunities for pupils to work in groups, discuss their ideas or report back to the class. Consequently, the skill of speaking is underdeveloped in many pupils. Occasions for pupils to write creatively or at length are infrequent except in coursework investigations for GCSE.
166. The use of computer simulations and video clips reinforce learning effectively. They also help pupils experience experiments not easily performed in college. Many practical lessons are supplemented by the effective use of data-logging equipment that allows pupils to collect and analyse results using a computer. The support of the technician is very effective in the smooth running of practical lessons.
167. Overall leadership is satisfactory, with some strengths and some weaknesses. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Since being criticised at the last inspection, the department has worked hard to improve the investigative skills of all pupils. Investigations are planned for in schemes of work and pupils produce key pieces of work for assessment each year. Help sheets are available for all abilities and have been very effective in improving the standard of coursework submitted by all pupils.
168. However, the setting and marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Homework tasks are not varied enough and often consist of completing worksheets. There is no specific homework timetable and the arrangements for grouping pupils and having them taught by more than one teacher do not make it easy to collect work in for marking. In many books, key pieces of work are missing or not marked and this is not helped by the poor attendance of some pupils. There is no marking policy for staff to follow for consistency and consequently, pupils are given little details of how to improve.
169. The department has adequate laboratory facilities on two floors, many of which have been upgraded. There is no lift for use by the technician or those pupils with physical difficulties. Occasionally, this means that large classes need to be taught in the smaller rooms on the ground floor and this restricts practical activities.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management that ensure a clear direction for the subject.
- The quality of teaching which motivates pupils to achieve, and ensures that pupils learn.
- Visits, which widen pupils' experiences.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment levels in Years 7 to 9 are not clear enough to help pupils see what to do to improve.
- There is not enough use of pupils' sketchbooks.
- Reference books are old and insufficient.

170. All pupils take art and design in Years 7 to 9. In Year 10 there are ten pupils taking foundation art and design GNVQ, and 34 pupils in Years 10 and 11 take GCSE.

171. Standards have improved since the time of the last inspection and the most recent GCSE examinations show that pupils attain results that are in line with those attained nationally. These results have been maintained over the last three years. Teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2001 show that 40 per cent of pupils achieved or exceeded expected levels, which is below the national expectations.
172. When pupils enter the college, their standards are well below national expectations. For example, few have done observational drawing, and a whole class has had virtually no experience of painting. The low standards are seen in their figure drawing, which shows little understanding of proportion. Consequently, the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good since they attain average standards at the end of Year 9. Good achievement throughout Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to reach average standards in Year 11. For example, a pupil with special educational needs produced an imaginative representation of 'reflections', showing two interlocking figures. This was of a high standard, and is typical of these pupils, whose talents match those of other pupils. The good achievement in Years 10 and 11, and the average standards reached, are due to very good teaching. However, some pupils' absences affect their progress and standards.
173. In Year 9, pupils select visual information appropriately to use in their final design. This was seen in studies of living things, when skills in using colour and pencil were often of a high standard. Pupils' understanding of composition is to an expected standard. For their still life studies, pupils undertook research, and wrote about artists who painted still life. This was to an expected level. Pupils' three-dimensional work is also to an expected standard, showing an understanding of texture in their name collages. By Year 11, pupils develop their ideas well to form their final piece. This was seen from a starting point with the study of Escher, through a study of buildings, to a final piece on Barnard Castle in the style of Escher. The drawing was of very high quality, and painting of quality was also seen, such as in the representation of black marbles with swirling patterns inside. However, through all years, the use of sketchbooks, with annotations, is not fully exploited. This has led to lower standards in the area of analysis and making critical judgements. Many pupils find it difficult to make critical judgements on their own and others' work.
174. Pupils on the GNVQ course are developing technical skills in line with course requirements. They are competent in producing lino prints, and they show a good understanding of how flowing lines and solid shapes can be combined. Pupils have a clear idea of the processes and care needed to produce a technically correct print.
175. Pupils learn very quickly. They listen carefully, and strive to attain high standards. Their high level of motivation is due to very good teaching, when the skills needed to produce good artwork are carefully taught. There is an emphasis on individuality and creativity, which results in progress. Pupils enjoy art and design, and this was seen on numerous occasions when they immediately started on their artwork and were reluctant to stop. Pupils sustain their effort throughout the lessons, and discuss their work sensibly with others and are ready to help. This was seen when pupils were printing, and pupils helped each other in the processes.
176. The quality of teaching is never less than good, with lessons predominantly very good, and one excellent lesson was seen. All lessons are very well planned and organised so that no time is wasted. Resources, which include pupils' work, are used very effectively, and this motivates pupils to succeed. For example, the use of overhead transparencies to show equipment and processes enabled the pupils to observe and consolidate their earlier learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are immensely

enthusiastic about their subject, which transmits to the pupils. Questioning is probing, to make pupils think, and arrive at the correct answer themselves. For example, when asked what to add to a drawing, the question was turned around to the class, which involved all pupils, and sensible suggestions showed that they had thought about the answer. Very good relationships encourage pupils to ask for help, which results in their learning very well and making very good progress. Positive encouragement is always given, which further motivates pupils to succeed.

177. The department is very well led and managed, and the teachers are experienced and committed to raise standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 in particular has improved, and pupils no longer have difficulty with research or organising their work. The head of department is aware of problems that some pupils have, such as in their personal study, and plans to emphasise that aspect earlier in the curriculum, which should assist in raising standards. However, the considerable expertise and experience in the area of textiles that one teacher has, is not fully utilised. All work is regularly marked, but pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently aware of the levels at which they are working, and therefore are not aware of the areas in which they could improve. This knowledge should assist in raising standards.

178. Art and design lessons take place in a tremendously stimulating environment, with pupils' work filling every available space, and which spills out into the corridors. Accommodation is very good and has a beneficial effect on standards; the department has a separate room for clay and one in which the sixth form can study. Reference books are dilapidated and insufficient to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers rely on bringing in their own resources. They give freely of their time, which encourages pupils to extend and improve their artwork. Art and design makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual development, for example when the under sea world was described. The subject also contributes to pupils' cultural development, with visits to galleries and experiencing an artist in residence. Visits make a very important contribution to pupils' experiences. For example, pupils visited the National Glass Centre, and this has resulted in the making of delicate glass hands, which, it is planned, will be joined to make a glass sculpture.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- A gradual improvement at GCSE level.
- Good standards of practical work in all aspect of the subject.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers.
- A collegiate team approach.
- Good displays of work used as a stimulus to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring standards and progress of pupils' work across the department.
- Continue to improve examination performance.
- Further develop control and computer aided design and manufacturing.
- Ensure pupils know and understand the criteria by which they are being assessed.
- Consider further courses in Years 10 and 11.

179. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory but standards remain below average by the end of Year 9. A minority of pupils reach above average standards. Pupils enter the college

with a varied level of experience in design and technology but with standards that are below average overall. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.

180. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils are most successful with practical work. By Year 9, pupils use a wide range of hand and machine tools safely and confidently. In a Year 9 class working on textiles, a group of pupils, many of whom are diagnosed as having behavioural difficulties, worked hard to design and make blocks for string printing. Another Year 9 group, investigating energy foods, made good use of the Internet to research different kinds of foods. They had a good grasp of what they were doing and could explain the method. Standards in this lesson were broadly average. Where work is below average, it is mainly due to pupils' poorer presentational skills such as out of proportion drawings or inappropriate use of colour, caused by using felt tip pens carelessly. Some handwriting is hard to read, and most pupils make spelling errors. The quality of girls' work is generally better than that of boys.
181. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were below the national average for A*-C grades but above the national average for A*-G grades. This is an improvement over the 2000 results. The department compares very favourably with the college's own results in other subjects. Graphics have performed well over the last three years, with resistant materials and food technology improving but still below the national average. Standards of current work in Year 11 are below the national average overall but good work is seen in all areas. Girls are performing at a higher level than boys overall, particularly in the quality of presentation and written work. Achievement is satisfactory, with greater success in practical work than in writing about it. There is much inaccurate spelling and some work is unfinished.
182. By Year 11, the best design folders show good use of colour and development of initial ideas. Pupils can carry out useful research and their work includes suitable photographs. They use ICT effectively. This was seen in a project on diabetes where links to meal plans and nutritional values were investigated.
183. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by teachers who use material suited to their needs when doing written or graphical work. Those with behavioural problems are aware of what is expected of them in a workshop area. In lessons seen, all pupils worked together well, whatever their needs or backgrounds, and achievement between Year 7 and Year 11 is satisfactory.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and in half the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. The best lessons have good pace and teachers use their good subject knowledge to expand or develop ideas. Pupils' learning is at least satisfactory because they are engaged by the interesting tasks. In a Year 7 lesson where pupils were involved in making a simple electronic circuit, they quickly learned the names and functions of the electronic components and worked with care and interest to make an electronic badge. Their good attitudes and the teacher's firm management enabled them to work safely with soldering irons, acquire new skills and understand the theory well enough to be able to suggest reasons why some of their circuits would not work.
185. Lessons where teaching and learning are satisfactory have many positive features but lack real pace. Learning in these lessons is hampered by pupils' inattention, and pupils lose interest when not directly supervised or where expectations are not sufficiently demanding.

186. Pupils' attitudes are generally good. They work well together and respond positively when suitably challenged. The majority of pupils enjoy their practical work but in some classes, pupils need to listen more carefully to the teacher's advice and instructions.
187. Departmental leadership is satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department is developing new initiatives and is in the process of using information to target pupils' performance. The team members work well together and share ideas for development.
188. Monitoring pupils' progress and standards is not rigorous enough and some of the documentation is out of date. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but pupils do not get enough experience with control, computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing. Some pupils in Year 10 do not have the opportunity to study food technology. The department could consider additional or alternative courses in Years 10 and 11. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place but there are occasions when teachers' and pupils' understanding of standards do not match. Marking is regularly completed and usually helpful.
189. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and good displays of work feature as a stimulus to learning. Some areas in resistant materials would benefit from refurbishment. Resources are adequate overall but there is a shortage of ICT equipment. Sewing machines are low in number and some hand tools need replacing.
190. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Improvements include development of the literacy strategy in using key words and vocabulary. In addition, all staff have received training in ICT. A departmental report system has been introduced. A technician gives invaluable support to the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results are close to the national average for grades A*-C.
- Standards are average by Year 11 and pupils achieve well for their ability.
- Pupils gain a good understanding and knowledge of the subject from specialist teachers.
- Geographical skills are very well developed through fieldwork.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to consistently raise attainment of boys.
- Provide better support in class for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Review the teaching schemes to include more recent case study materials.

191. Recent GCSE results in were close to the national average for A*-C grades and show a rising trend. Standards in examinations have improved since the last inspection. In 2000, girls and boys performed at a similar level although in 2001, the results of girls were well above the national average. Results for boys declined and were well below the national average because there was a greater proportion of grade D passes. Very good coursework has improved examination results. In 2001, half the candidates gained a grade A for coursework. Pupils get better results in geography than in most other subjects.

192. Overall, standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are below average. However, pupils are doing better than expected given their attainment on entry. Attainable targets are set and most pupils reach these by the end of Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are average. Overall, pupils' achievement is good in all years.
193. By Year 9, pupils work in ability groups. The standard of work seen and observed in lessons in the upper sets is very high and above the expected standard. There is a minority of exceptional pupils who are encouraged to excel. For example, the teacher read to the class a pupil's account of a Kobi earthquake victim's reaction to the disaster. The quality of this empathetic and emotional writing was outstanding, both in its factual content and spiritual dimension. Literacy, numeracy and graphical skills are well developed in tasks such as pupils comparing the differences in rainfall and temperature between Manaus and Durham. Higher attaining pupils interpret and analyse their work carefully and then use geographical terms accurately to describe interaction of winds and temperatures to form geographical patterns. Girls take more pride in the presentation of their work than boys.
194. Middle attaining pupils record different approaches to the management of the landscape and explain clearly how plants and wild life can survive in the desert. However, there is a greater proportion of pupils who work below the national standard. Key words are spelled incorrectly and their drawing of graphs is weak. Although pupils with special needs become absorbed in their learning and they answer questions readily, the standards they achieve in written work is at a low level. Their difficulties are often exacerbated by sporadic absence from college.
195. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a GCSE course. The overall standard of work is average. Its depth and complexity rightly increases in Years 10 and 11. There is good evidence of progression in knowledge and understanding of topics studied with some sophisticated application of geographical skills in class work and coursework. By Year 11, pupils understand how to calculate demographic changes and can describe the differences in population growths in countries at different stages of economic development. This is extended into the fieldwork as pupils identify the central business district of Durham. More able pupils compare it with the textbook models. They hypothesise and analyse their findings to consider the influence of the central business district. This work is of above average standard and where there is good evidence of extensive individual work, some aspects are well above the expected level for GCSE. Hand and ICT drawn graphs and diagrams illustrate well-developed skills. Within the work there are some minor spelling errors. Although the amount of coursework completed by lower attaining pupils is modest, they do as well as they can and complete sufficient work to ensure an examination entry. The small minority of traveller pupils are fully integrated into classes.
196. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in all years. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons are well planned to incorporate selective video excerpts and lessons are conducted at a good pace. Pupils learn well and enjoy group work and decision-making exercises when they can take responsibility for their own learning and sequence events from the perspective of different people after events such as the Kobi earthquake. Pupils are often extended to complete a range of activities within the single period to include very good opportunities for reading, speaking, writing and listening. For example, a Year 10 GCSE lesson concluded when the pupils closed their eyes and listened to a description of the landscape as the teacher checked on their new learning. ICT has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It is smoothly integrated into lesson planning and pupils enjoy the challenge of using the Internet. They extract key relevant facts from the websites.

197. The demands teachers put on pupils reflect their high expectations of them. The homework set is often the basis for the next lesson and pupils willingly conduct their independent research. Homework is always a meaningful exercise to reinforce and extend learning.
198. Much fieldwork is outstanding. However, although assessment procedures are very thorough, the information to form assessment is not always used sufficiently to adapt teaching to match the pupils' needs, particularly for pupils with individual education plans that emphasise their difficulties in literacy and number. For lower attaining and special educational needs pupils, the match of learning support materials, such as templates to help them organise their written work, is not always well considered. There is very little additional help in the classroom although some groups have a considerable proportion of pupils with special needs.
199. The quality of learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11. Pupils are keen to learn and often learn well. They acquire a very good understanding and knowledge of the subject to recall geographical phenomena. For example, a boy in Year 7 was able to explain clearly the effects of global warming on local flooding. Pupils develop mature and sophisticated geographical skills from Year 7. They concentrate well in lessons and enjoy the opportunities given for group work and independent learning, particularly from the fieldwork and the challenging homework tasks set. Pupils know how well they are achieving and work hard to attain the high targets set for them.
200. The department is very well led and managed by the chair of humanities. The high standards noted in the previous inspection have been maintained and examination results have improved. Methods for assessing pupils' progress have also improved. Classroom practice is monitored and evaluated regularly. The departmental documentation and resources are well considered although, in review, the teaching schemes will benefit from the inclusion of more recent case study materials. Teachers give generously of their own time for field studies and extension classes.

HISTORY

Overall provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well.
- The curriculum has been developed to meet the needs of the pupils.
- GCSE results have risen sharply in the last three years.

Areas for improvement

- Extend planning to include clearer provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

201. Standards of work are average, both in Year 9 and Year 11. There has been a marked improvement in GCSE results since 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades of A*-C has risen from 17 per cent to 58.8 per cent, which is close to the national average. Work seen during the inspection showed that all ability groups, and both boys and girls, are working close to national expectations.
202. Overall achievement by pupils is good. Pupils progress well across the college in the development of their historical skills. Pupils in Year 7 use observational skills to deepen their knowledge of the Roman Empire when watching film evidence. Higher attaining

pupils in Year 9 are able to convert written evidence about coal production into graphs and to draw sound conclusions. All pupils in Year 11 are able to read and quickly analyse information about an aspect of the Cold War.

203. Teaching is very good in all years. All lessons seen were at least good and contributed to the overall good learning by pupils in all years. The difference between the overall very good teaching and the good learning by pupils is due to the pace of learning by pupils, which is hindered to some extent by their literacy needs. Most pupils have difficulties with the recording and analysis of historical information. Skilful teaching sometimes overcomes these problems, for example in a middle set in Year 9, the stimulus of learning about the local mining heritage, and the personal reference points used by the teacher, motivated pupils to respond quickly, both orally and in writing. Similarly, a mixed ability class in Year 7 responded to the fast pace of their lesson on Roman chariot races because of the stimulating resources and tasks, and in a Year 11 lesson, well-structured pair work enabled pupils to work confidently together.
204. Pupils in Year 9 are helped by well-chosen primary and secondary historical sources to offer opinions about the development of mining in south-west Durham, for example by comparing maps of the area from 1650 to those of the mid 19th century. By thoughtful questioning as to their own local knowledge and previous learning, most pupils are able to identify some of the longer-term causes of industrial development. Towards the end of Year 11, both lower and higher attaining pupils are able to form opinions about the choices faced by President Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis. They are able to do this because the teacher's subject knowledge is very good; the higher attainers particularly, therefore, have a good background knowledge of the Cold War and the tasks are well designed for all pupils to make best use of good resources. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the college and staff are well informed as to the general targets for their development.
205. The department makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There has been good recent promotion of worksheets that provide frameworks to help pupils to structure their understanding for both short and longer pieces of writing. For example, pupils wrote at length on an assessment on the causes of the English Civil War. Lists of key words are displayed in classrooms and used by teachers in their board work to enhance vocabulary and to aid correct spelling, as seen in a Year 8 lesson where 'bias' and 'reliability' were highlighted. Pupils' sequencing skills are developed through a variety of timelines. To support their historical analysis, they are required to put information into graphs, for example population change during the Irish famine and changes in the volume of coal production during the industrial revolution. Calculations of speed and distance are built into a study of Roman charioteers. ICT is used satisfactorily and is helping to improve pupils' learning through planned use of wordprocessed tasks, desktop publishing skills and classroom-based use of the Internet.
206. There is sound planning for the implementation of citizenship in the planning to date for Years 7 and 8, for example in the role of the individual in Roman society. There is good provision for the pupils' spiritual development in the teaching of World War 1 and the holocaust. Moral issues are tackled in terms of the values held by past societies, for example regarding the slave trade and child labour. There is ample opportunity for pupils to learn about the variety of ideas and organisation of other societies, both British and European; teaching strategies increasingly try to promote pupils' own social skills, for example through paired written tasks and role-play. Cultural provision is good as pupils study their local heritage, and aspects of more distant cultures, for example the North American Indians and black peoples of America.

207. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum has been creatively developed in Years 7 to 9 to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum and the needs and interests of the pupils. A well-planned new unit on the Roman empire has been added to the Year 7 course. The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 has several new topics that add depth to the courses, for example studies of social attitudes to 'witches' in the 16th century, the Irish famine of the 1840s and local mining experience from the 18th century and with cotemporary family links. In 2000, GCSE candidates began a new course on the modern world, which, without the former pressure of coursework, is reasonably viewed as better suiting pupils' interests and capabilities than the previous syllabus.

208. The head of department has made rapid changes to assessment procedures that enable teachers to monitor pupils' progress more closely. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have descriptions of what they should be able to understand, and of historical skills at each National Curriculum level. Target levels are clearly set for pupils in Year 7 and homework is designed to meet the range of targets in mixed ability groups. A pupil progress sheet is used to record the outcomes of assessment tasks and these are stored in the pupils' own files to encourage them to be involved in their own progress. Similarly in Years 10 and 11, a pupil-review sheet is used to record teachers' advice to pupils as to how to progress further and the pupils contribute an evaluation of their own progress. The department makes good use of college generated data and subject test scores to establish target grades for GCSE candidates, although this information is not presented to the department in a format that is easy to use.

209. The department has made a series of very good improvements since the last inspection. The head of department has tackled all the issues raised in the last report energetically and systematically. In addition to the recent initiatives in curriculum, assessment and the promotion of cross-curricular skills, resources are now good. New textbooks suit the reading abilities of all pupils and the stock of audio-visual resources is now good. Departmental documentation reflects thoughtful long-term planning and implementation of whole-college policies. However, there is little detailed planning to exploit opportunities offered to provide for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and give clear explanations that help pupils to learn.
- Teachers have very good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils are interested in the subject and they behave well in lessons.
- The leadership of the department.

Areas for improvement

- There is little use of criteria in Years 7 to 9 to help pupils to set their own targets for improvement.
- There is a need to further develop cross-curricular ICT in all subjects.

210. In 2001, GCSE results were well below national levels. However, recent changes in the staffing and management of the department are leading to a significant improvement in attainment. The standards of work seen during the inspection by pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 are at levels expected for their age and represent good achievement overall.
211. By Year 9, pupils are producing basic web pages using wordprocessing skills and importing clip art and images. Pupils understand how a hyperlink works and lower attaining pupils can use a simple hyperlink between two web pages. Average and higher attaining pupils are able to create more attractive web pages and use hyperlinks between up to three pages. Pupils have used their computer skills to produce a guide to Bishop Auckland. They can find information on the weather on the Internet and produce rainfall graphs from these. Lower attaining pupils, many with special educational needs, understand the basic ideas of spreadsheets, know about cell location and how to use simple formula. Average and higher attaining pupils know how to lay out business letters, draw flow charts and make use of spreadsheets and create graphs from these.
212. Pupils in Year 11 are following GCSE full and short courses as well as Certificate of Achievement in ICT. As part of their work, pupils create data capture forms for work with databases, with higher attaining pupils showing good understanding of the way databases are used. Pupils taking a full GCSE course are working on individual projects, such as designing a music shop database, dealing with stock control in a sports shop or creating an advertising leaflet for a horse and carriage company. In all project work, pupils make use of higher-level skills working with the Internet, spreadsheets, databases and more advanced wordprocessing skills.
213. In Year 10, pupils follow a range of GNVQ courses. Pupils have higher-level skills in wordprocessing and make good use of spreadsheets. They know how to make Internet searches efficiently and effectively as they develop their own web pages, learning how to make best use of font size, colour and background.
214. Teaching is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to give clear explanations, which help pupils learn. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers mean that pupils respond well to teachers' instructions. This has a significant impact on their very good learning. Lessons are very well planned and tasks selected are appropriate to pupils' attainment levels. Planning was particularly effective with a lower attaining Year 9 class, where the pace of the lesson, coupled with a skilful mix of class and individual teaching, enabled these pupils to make significant progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils being able to work independently, and this allows teachers to respond to individual pupils' needs. Objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons so that they understand what is expected of them and what they are to achieve. The good summing-up sessions at the end of lessons help consolidate learning and give pupils a sense of achievement. Excellent lessons have pace, detailed explanations of examination requirements, and clearly focused question and answer sessions.
215. Pupils respond well to the very good teaching. They think for themselves and this leads to very good learning. Pupils are always very well managed, and there is a good working atmosphere in all lessons. Pupils who are completing projects in the full GCSE course are set clear targets related to their projects in each lesson, enabling them to be productive and focused. Little use is made of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and the use of these, or similar criteria, would help pupils set their own targets for improvement.

216. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic about the subject. They stay focused on tasks and work independently when given the opportunity and also co-operate well when working in pairs. In question and answer sessions, pupils are responsive. Some Year 10 pupils have made a commitment to attend a class after college so that they can gain a full GNVQ as they are unable to take the full course because of their other option subjects
217. In all lessons, pupils learn new skills and reinforce existing ones, and make use of previously learned skills. There is very good learning by lower attaining pupils in Year 9 in the use of spreadsheets for modelling. However, all pupils of all attainment levels have made significant progress in the subject since the start of this academic year with the introduction of new teaching schemes in Years 7 to 9, the introduction of GNVQ ICT in Year 10 and accredited courses for all pupils in Year 11. There is good achievement by all pupils as they are now reaching the standards commensurate with their age.
218. There is very good management and leadership of a strong department, with a clear vision for development and commitment to improve standards. Since the start of this academic year, there has been significant development of the subject, both in the range of courses and the quality of teaching. All pupils in Year 11 are now taking accredited courses; the introduction of a CLAIT⁴ course for parents and pupils in Year 7 is a very good innovation. There has been a very good response to the previous inspection, standards are being raised and the very good development plan lays the foundation for future improvements.
219. Cross-curricular ICT continues to be developed in other subjects. All teachers have now received nationally funded training and more use is being made of ICT in teaching. All departments, apart from music, have planned use of ICT; this is particularly good in religious education. The imminent increase in the number of computer rooms and equipment should further increase the opportunities for pupils to make use of their ICT skills in other subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Improved and improving administration and documentation.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient time allowed for modern foreign languages in the curriculum.
- Staffing levels do not meet requirements of the curriculum.
- There is not enough focus on the use of the foreign language in lessons.

220. Results at GCSE A*-C have declined since the previous inspection. In 2001, results in both French and German were well below the national average. They compared unfavourably to most other subjects. However, the overall pass rate A*-G has remained at or above national averages. Boys performed particularly badly in French at A*-C. The girls outperformed the boys in line with national gender differences.

221. The college does not have enough language teachers to provide all pupils with the amount of tuition needed to reach expected standards by Year 9 or Year 11. In addition,

⁴ Computer Literacy and Information Technology

the college's attempt to provide two languages for the most able linguists has diluted the slim provision further and most pupils do not have enough tuition to build and reinforce the skills and knowledge needed. This is the major reason for falling standards.

222. Standards of work seen in Year 9 in French are below the national average. From Year 8, lower attainers have only one French lesson per week. The volume of their written work is inadequate and these pupils fall further behind the rest. This effectively excludes them from a full GCSE course.
223. Higher attainers start German in Year 9. This, coupled with the low time allocation, is too late and pupils receive insufficient tuition compared with French. Pupils do not develop sufficient confidence with, or interest in, the language, and none have chosen to continue it in the current Year 10.
224. One group of pupils studies Spanish in Year 11. Standards in this mixed ability GCSE class are very low. After over 250 hours of tuition, pupils show alarming deficiencies in rudimentary vocabulary, grammar and conversation skills.
225. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well below average in both French and German, although a number of pieces of writing by higher attainers showed good standards of accuracy. Lower attainers are unable to make real headway in one lesson a week. Weaknesses in listening and speaking still persist as pupils are unable to compensate for deficiencies going back to earlier years.
226. Achievement is unsatisfactory at all stages. It is at its worst amongst lower and some average attainers who get least teaching time. There is not enough scope for the necessary repetition and reinforcement activities. Higher and some average attainers benefit from more frequent tuition and so the problem of remembering is less acute.
227. Pupils with special educational needs learn well when they are supported in class in all four language skills. When support is not available, they cope satisfactorily with listening and speaking and are often not easily detectable from other pupils. However, as with other pupils, they do not have the opportunity to reinforce these skills.
228. In all three languages, prospective GCSE candidates do not speak and write at length. There is little reading aloud in class to boost oral confidence and to improve pronunciation. The unsatisfactory speaking and writing skills seen in other subjects are reflected in pupils' standards of speaking and writing in the foreign language. The selection of library books is too limited to encourage pupils to read contemporary accounts of life in the countries whose languages they are studying, and there are no language CDs for use with computers.
229. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with the occasional lesson above or below this standard. Pupils often appear to make satisfactory progress in lessons thanks to the teaching strategies deployed. However, the learning is quickly forgotten in the week-long gaps between lessons that most pupils experience.
230. Teachers are very active monitors of progress in class. They know their students well and are thus able to help and support individuals in the most appropriate way. In better lessons, a suitable variety of tasks and activities sustains pace, motivation and interest. They teach additional after-college revision classes voluntarily. The sharing of aims at the beginning of the lesson and a review of learning at the end to demonstrate learning is a positive feature. In several classes, teachers handled potentially disruptive pupils with considerable skill without shouting or threats.

231. In all language lessons, listening and speaking skills are underdeveloped because the use of the foreign language is not firmly embedded in standard classroom practice. No foreign language assistants are employed to improve conversation skills. Teachers tend to miss opportunities to practise foreign language structures. This means that many average and lower attainers cannot form sentences because they focus on individual words.
232. The acting head of department was very recently appointed. It is therefore premature to assess the impact of her leadership. Certainly a good start has been made on organisation and departmental documentation. She will need additional time to reflect on employing foreign language assistants to promote listening and speaking. Incorporating ICT is already underway by e-mailing abroad and exploring the Internet. The existing programme of study trips abroad stimulates interest in France and Germany and in their languages.
233. Assessment is being improved systematically with more emphasis being placed on targeting individual language skills. Reports to parents do not highlight strengths and weaknesses in specific language skills.
234. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because of staffing problems and inadequate curriculum provision. However, the department has improved its marking standards with good pointers on how to improve. Better use of homework is evident where there is more than one lesson per week. Teaching schemes are now more detailed and are usable working documents. Accommodation is now good. Girls still outperform boys in examinations although no real difference could be detected in lessons. Self-expression still needs development and the place and role of Spanish is uncertain.
235. The department is not placed to make significant progress until there is a closer match between the curriculum and staffing levels.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Support given by the music support teacher to GCSE candidates.

Areas for improvement

- Standards achieved by pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- To develop a scheme of work which is appropriate for all pupils.
- Assessment of pupils' work, including monitoring of progress.
- The quality of accommodation.
- The quality and variety of music resources to support learning.

236. The music department is currently without leadership. During the inspection, the lessons observed were taught by a teacher who is temporary and new to the college. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable support for the department from the local authority and the college. However, despite this support, the key issues identified then have not been addressed and improvement is unsatisfactory.

237. In relation to what could be expected of these pupils, achievement is poor in Years 7 to 9. The teacher assessments of standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 indicate that pupils are well below the national expectations. The latest results for 2001 show that a previous trend of improvement has been reversed. Girls achieve considerably better than boys with twice as many girls than boys reaching the expected level. However, this disparity was not seen in lessons where boys and girls achieve similarly, with boys showing more application towards their work. Pupils have not had a breadth and range of musical activities in order to develop their practical or listening skills sufficiently.
238. Only a small number of pupils choose to study music for GCSE, all achieve a grade with several achieving A*-C. These standards are an improvement since the last inspection and have been consistently achieved for the last three years. The achievement of these pupils is satisfactory.
239. By Year 9, standards of work seen in lessons are well below expectations for all pupils. Pupils lack a basic understanding of musical skills and knowledge. Previous teaching has been unsatisfactory for these pupils for some time. Tasks set include copious copying of information and drawing charts and pictures of instruments. However, pupils cannot discuss characteristics of different types of music or remember names of instruments. There is very little practical work so pupils' instrumental skills are poor. This was seen in a Year 9 class where pupils were given an extract from 'The Entertainer' to play. Few can read and relate the written music to the keyboard or understand the rhythmic complexity of the piece. This meant that pupils made no progress during the lesson and were disillusioned by their lack of success. The majority of pupils are unable to appraise their own and others' compositions critically. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make unsatisfactory progress. This is because the work given is not matched to their needs.
240. There are no tuned and untuned percussion instruments and despite a few new keyboards recently purchased, the overall provision of resources for learning is poor. This is having a negative impact on the standards achieved in music.
241. Standards in Year 11 are below average. Pupils do not use musical language in their answers and are unable to discuss or describe how they have produced their compositions. This shows a lack of skill development and understanding of the fundamentals of musical composition that have not been developed in Years 7 to 9. Written answers are superficial and pupils are unable to spell key musical words correctly. Pupils' compositions are all very similar with simple melodies with basic chord accompaniment. This shows a formulaic approach and does not aid or enhance individual creativity. None have been notated in any form and pupils are not confident to read and use standard notation. Compositions are presented using computer programs. However, pupils are not confident users and are unable to describe and discuss their work in detail.
242. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall for pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, it was unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Much of the unsatisfactory teaching is linked to inappropriate tasks given to pupils who do not have sufficient musical skills. All pupils are expected to do the same work and often the language and explanations used by the teacher are too complicated for pupils to understand. Teaching schemes have not been revised to provide a variety of activities and there is a history of very little practical work. Lessons are not varied enough in content and levels of difficulty to stimulate and encourage pupils to give of their best. This means that very often pupils, especially girls, become apathetic or

disrupt the learning of the rest of the class. There is no assessment or tracking of pupil progress. This needs to be incorporated into teaching schemes and shared with pupils so that they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

243. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not covered the syllabus in sufficient detail in order to prepare them for examination. Their achievement is therefore unsatisfactory. Satisfactory teaching focused on the needs of the examination, for example enabling pupils to link their vocal work with the theory of chords and musical notation. However, there is no record of what pupils have already covered, and the teacher had to spend time checking this.
244. The support given for pupils' practical work by staff from the local authority music services is very good. This means that pupils' practical skills are developed systematically and this is of benefit for that element of the examination.
245. The subject is again without leadership and much of the previous support given by music services and the college has not been translated into practice. The links with the music services are good, but few pupils learn to play instruments and there are now no extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, rooms are often cold and there are no practice rooms for group work. The décor and display are shabby with much redundant equipment in the rooms. This does not provide a stimulating learning environment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils' interest and attitudes towards physical education.
- Assessment systems in all years.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum is weighted towards games.
- Some of the outdoor accommodation is unsatisfactory.

246. In GCSE in 2001, Year 11 boys' results were in line with national averages, however girls' results were below the national average.
247. By Year 9, standards of work seen during the inspection are average. For example, in netball by Year 9, pupils can pass and receive the ball with sufficient control. They know basic rules, including correct footwork, although some are unsure about the court areas. In soccer in this year, there is a wide range of attainment. The majority of pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Two higher attaining pupils in the class have good control in receiving the ball and close dribbling skills. In badminton, pupils understand short service but not all are able to perform with control and consistency. Pupils know court markings and they can play high, clear shots to average standards.
248. By Year 11 in trampolining, pupils can perform basic jumps and combine these into short sequences of a satisfactory standard. In the theory part of the course, pupils understand the importance of diet and correct weight for sporting activities. In Year 11 soccer, the majority of pupils are working at the expected level and a number of pupils

show higher-level skills in dribbling and passing over longer distances. All pupils have a good understanding of positions and game tactics and play a full game to the expected standard. In GCSE theory in this year, there is a full range of attainment A*-E. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of anatomy, physiology, diet, exercise and training and understand how these relate to sporting activities.

249. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which helps them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to pupils, helping them learn new skills and improve existing ones. Lessons are well planned, with well-selected and appropriate practices for pupils of all attainment levels, although sometimes tasks are not challenging enough, particularly for older pupils. In good lessons, objectives are shared with pupils at the start and this helps pupils focus on what they might be expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Classes are well managed, pupils well behaved and, in all lessons, there are good relationships between teachers and pupils that contribute to pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of question and answer time which helps pupils share ideas and learn effectively in both classroom based lessons as well as in practical ones. The very good use of a video camera in teaching trampolining allows pupils to evaluate their own performances effectively and so contributes to their learning. In good lessons, pupils are given some independence when taking charge of their own warm up. In all lessons, pupils show interest in the subject and there are high levels of active participation.
250. In all lessons, pupils of all attainment levels learn new skills, improve and refine existing ones and increase their knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the learning is good and there is significant gain in skills during the lesson. In GCSE trampolining in Year 10, pupils learned a front drop in a lesson, with one higher attaining pupil using a half turn to initiate the move. However, in some activities, there is less progress than might be expected over a longer period of time. This is mainly due to the rotation of topics within the physical education programme, so that pupils forget skills learned in one area when they move on to the next. In Year 8 hockey, pupils have not developed the expected levels of control, whilst in Year 10 netball, pupils have not learned sufficient basic skills to play an effective game. Overall, however, achievement is satisfactory.
251. There is good leadership and management of the department with a shared vision to provide good experiences in physical education for all pupils. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and supports college teams, so giving opportunities for talented pupils. However, in Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is weighted towards games and there is not enough time given to dance or outdoor and adventurous activities.
252. The indoor accommodation is satisfactory but the lack of a sports hall restricts development of pupils' performances in activities such as badminton and basketball. The quality of the hard play area is poor with no stop netting, which makes it unsuitable for tennis. The area, which is used for netball, is unattractive and surrounded by derelict buildings where there is some vandalism. The department has developed good links with local primary schools through the Wear Valley Sport Action Zone, the sports co-ordinator being based in the college.
253. There has been a satisfactory response to the previous inspection, standards have been maintained and teaching is good. Pupils are interested in and enthusiastic about the subject and there are good participation rates. The change in examination board for GCSE has led to improved boys' results in 2001 and this exam is more suitable for King James I pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The good and often very good teaching and lesson planning.
- Management and leadership of the subject.
- Resources used and the displays in rooms that create a positive and supportive atmosphere for learning.
- The contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils.
- Planning of opportunities to widen pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural society.

254. By the end of Year 9, attainment is below the expectations of the Durham Agreed Syllabus. Achievement is good however for a significant majority, when account is taken of their religious education knowledge and general level of attainment on entry to the college in Year 7. GCSE short course results over the last two years, since this examination was introduced, show an upward trend. In 2001, results were in line with the national average for the higher A*-C grades and above for A* grades.

255. From observations in lessons and scrutiny of books, most pupils are able to carry out enquiry tasks and show a satisfactory knowledge of the significance of symbolism in religion. Good examples were seen in Year 9, in lessons and in books, when pupils were examining the origin and affects of kosher rules on Jewish people. By Year 9, they are developing a knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and traditions of worship of the major world faiths studied. The overall level of understanding is however below the expectation of the Durham Agreed Syllabus. Achievement is hindered for a significant number by weak spelling and sentence construction. In certain lessons, some pupils lack empathy and understanding of the reasons for certain religious practices, for example the practice of fasting in Islam.

256. In both the short course GCSE and certificate groups, pupils achieve well in relation to their level of attainment at the age of 14 to reach average standards. By Year 11, in lessons and in books, higher attaining pupils display a good understanding of the issues associated with belief in a God. This was seen in a lesson exploring the first cause and design arguments for the existence of a divine being. Other pupils show satisfactory knowledge and understanding. From books inspected, this is also true of topics covering the sanctity of life, prejudice and the different roles for men and women in and between religions. Certificate of Achievement pupils have a satisfactory understanding of religion and the way it is dealt with on television and in the press. Those pupils with particular learning needs are fully included in discussions and tasks in lessons. They make equivalent progress in relation to their targets as all other pupils.

257. Teaching and learning are good with a high proportion of very good teaching. Teachers are aware of pupils' individual needs and plan accordingly. There has been a considerable improvement in planning for the needs of the less able pupils and this has a positive impact on learning. With the help of teachers, pupils at all stages on the register of special educational needs are provided with support and are positively encouraged to participate in lesson by reading aloud, responding to questions and completing written work. Good progress in relation to targets set equates with that of the majority of pupils. Lessons are well structured to ensure key questions are tackled.

There is however room to develop strategies to more rigorously challenge the higher attaining pupils. Good classroom management in a significant majority of lessons and positive attitudes from most pupils create a good atmosphere for learning and pupils achieve well. Teaching schemes are inclusive and pupils with special educational needs receive good support from class teachers. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching results from weak classroom management and a lack of challenge in the tasks set and this has a detrimental effect on the standards achieved.

258. Leadership and management are very good and effective progress has been made to tackle the issues raised in the last report. Reports to parents are now good and assessment procedures have improved considerably with data being used effectively to judge progress and plan lessons. A significant improvement has been made in the provision of tasks to meet different levels of ability. The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Documentation is clear and thorough and guides the work of the department. The requirements of the Durham Agreed Syllabus are met up to the end of Year 11.

BUSINESS STUDIES

259. Business studies is a popular choice in Years 10 and 11 and students do well. The organisation of the subject is well suited to meet the needs and aspirations of many pupils. The GCSE course is the main form of accreditation, but it is also being offered as a foundation level GNVQ course in Year 10.
260. GCSE results are consistently just above average. In 2001 all pupils achieved grades A*-G and 57 per cent of these were in the upper range of A*-C. The success is due to good teaching and to the well-planned course with activities that relate well to pupils' own experience. Teachers are enthusiastic and use their own experience of working in the business world to illuminate discussions about such topics as management styles and communication. Activities, such as examining in detail a video clip of an interview, interest pupils and lead them to make accurate and perceptive observations. There is good balance of direct teaching and individual work. Individual work is carefully planned to enable the higher attaining students to go more deeply into aspects of business management, while lower attaining pupils are able to develop their understanding of basic ideas and principles. Lesson-by-lesson, pupils learn well and achievement overall is good.
261. The wide ability range in some classes sometimes causes the teacher to give too many of the answers instead of getting pupils to think for themselves. While this leads to pupils taking accurate and useful notes, it does mean that, in sessions that are taught directly by the teacher, some of the higher attaining pupils do not have to make the intellectual effort that characterises their individual work.
262. The subject is equally popular with boys and girls. Although the department analyses results in to see whether pupils achieve their expected grades, there is no overall evaluation of the difference in performance between boys and girls. In lessons, girls tend to make less contribution to discussion, and teachers are not sufficiently alert to the need to direct questions to girls and encourage them to speak out.
263. The department makes very good use of information from pupils' assessments in this and other subjects to set targets for GCSE grades, and these have proved to be challenging but realistic. The assessment information however, is not presented to the

department in a form that is easy to use; time would be saved if the college's system for compiling and managing records was used more efficiently.

264. The good teaching and enthusiasm of the teachers encourage pupils to succeed and to go on to study the subject further in the sixth form.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

265. Pupils can study this GNVQ from Year 10 where foundation and intermediate levels are offered, through to intermediate and advanced levels in the sixth form. In Years 10 and 11 the course is popular with girls, though there is a small number of boys in Year 11. The course is well planned to enable pupils to link their own everyday experience with the requirements of the qualification. Most pupils following the foundation course require quite a lot of help to organise their work and follow assignments, and the well-planned course provides them with effective support. Higher attainers are given more challenging work, but there are times when they do the same work as the foundation candidates, and here they sometimes have to wait for the others to catch up.
266. By Year 11, pupils have a good grasp of the needs of many groups in society, and carry out research in their own locality, for example into the way children develop, or the way elderly clients in residential homes respond to their treatment. They have a working knowledge of basic physiology and some insight into the way social services are run.
267. Teaching is effective and pupils' achievement is good because teachers make sure pupils are conscientious and thorough. Their work shows care and pride. Pupils manage their portfolios well and wordprocess most of their notes using a spellchecker.

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

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

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

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Business	9	87.5	n/a	12.5	n/a	2.35	n/a

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Physics	4	25	40	75	88	5.0	5.67
Business	13	31	33	77	93	4.77	5.50
Geography	7	43	38	86	92	5.4	5.74
English	5	20	37	100	95	5.6	5.91
Media studies	5	0	n/a	100	n/a	4.8	n/a
Design technology	10	0	30	70	90	2.00	5.38
Art	3	0	46	66	97	2.0	6.57
Chemistry	3	33	43	67	91	7.33	5.90
Communications studies	5	0	31	100	93	4.40	5.53
History	1	0	36	0	88	0	5.45

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Business Intermediate	9	66	n/a	0	n/a	47	n/a
Intermediate Leisure and tourism	4	75	25	0	n/a	35	n/a
Intermediate Health and social care	8	75	25	2	n/a	44.5	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and physics but biology was also sampled. There are no students studying any other sciences at present. One biology lesson was observed and the teaching was good. Very small numbers choose biology, and they usually achieve grades in line with expectations based on their earlier GCSE results.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a thorough command of the subject.
- Range of courses: AS-level; A-level; GCSE; re-sits and key skills application of number.

Areas for improvement

- Develop assessment procedures so that there is an identifiable connection between regular assessments and the system of grades used in AS- and A-level modules.
- Measure progress against short-term, individual student targets that are agreed with the students and discuss with them how they are to be met.
- Adopt a more rigorous approach to the methodical presentation of solutions, particularly in algebra and in compiling notes for future reference.

268. Standards of attainment in A-level GCE examinations broadly reflect students' prior learning and vary accordingly. In the reporting year 2001, there were no candidates. In the previous two years, 1999 and 2000, there were only three candidates, two at grade E and one at grade N. Their mathematics results were lower than those they obtained in their other subjects. In 1998, there were seven candidates and, taking the three years together, eight out of the ten candidates (nine male, one female) achieved an A-level grade, with two obtaining a grade B, two a grade C, one a grade D and three a grade E. An analysis of the 1998 results indicates that four of the seven students achieved grades in excess of expectation and that the overall level of achievement was satisfactory. A small number of students do not complete the course, typically one or two students per A-level group.

269. The standard of work seen in A-level lessons and students' written work is average. The range of work to date reflects the standards required for students to attain up to grade C level. The achievement of the majority of students is satisfactory and generally matches their prior attainment. In the present Year 13, there are only two students and in Year 12, there are ten. Their GCSE grades range from A*-C, mainly grade B, and their work generally reflects these levels of prior attainment. There is systematic progression in both depth and difficulty. The quality of students' notes varies and there is a lack of structured explanations to support revision. For example, few students annotate their notes to suit their individual learning needs.

270. Most students are at ease with the statistics element of the course and for most, the greatest problems are experienced with pure mathematics. This is largely because of weaknesses with basic algebraic skills. Most students cope well with the introduction of new topics, but a lack of competence with essential algebraic manipulation sometimes hinders progress for those lacking in confidence. The quality of solutions ranges from good to an inadequate level of rigour, but is mainly at the expected standard. Marking and assessment of students' work vary in both frequency and detail. In the best

instances, there is detailed analysis and correction of inaccuracies, with supporting comments. There are inadequacies in the system of grading students' work because the connection with how well a student is performing in relation to A-level grades is not always clear. Although the assessment of work lacks formality, it is evident that most students make satisfactory progress over time.

271. There are no female students in Year 13, but in Year 12, in which there are two, there is no discernible difference in the respective work of male and female students. The use of ICT in A-level lessons to highlight ideas, remove straightforward, repetitious processes and heighten understanding of concepts was not evident in lessons or in students' prior work. ICT is, however, used effectively in supporting a course for those students re-sitting their GCSE mathematics and, of the 14 students who started the course, four have already attained a grade C in the November 2001 examinations. The work produced by students in the specific lessons allocated for the key skills application of number modules in both Year 12 and Year 13 meets the needs of students across the curriculum and is matched to the expected standards.
272. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Its quality ranges from satisfactory to very good. Two particular strengths characterise most lessons: the subject command of the teachers and the good relationships that have been established between teachers and students, particularly in Year 12. The combination of these two factors and the positive attitude to study of most students ensure that lessons systematically build on prior learning. For example, during work on the Poisson distribution, the teacher skilfully summarised all the essential knowledge and skills required so that students could enjoy success with questions at examination level. Students consistently apply themselves to their work with sustained concentration. In the best lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm for mathematics is transmitted to the students. Their command of the subject enables them to formulate questions that promote learning with understanding and they use any incorrect student responses to skilfully isolate misconceptions. For example, when working with polynomials, the teacher was able to separate the new work on equating coefficients, which did not present any problem of understanding, from weaknesses in the students' capacity to manipulate algebraic functions. The teacher illuminated understanding of the new work, identified and corrected the weaknesses so that the students could then proceed and make the required progress.
273. There is a good match of teachers to the requirements of the various courses in Years 12 and 13. They share a commitment to do the best for the students and improve results but they do not formally share the good practice that clearly exists. The subject is well managed, but there is inadequate monitoring of performance.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Good teacher/student relationships give students the confidence to express opinions and views.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge applied to probing questioning enables students to deepen their understanding.
- Students share ideas freely and work well together.
- Students find the course relevant to everyday life and hence are motivated to learn.

Areas for improvement

- Marking to point out areas for further study is inconsistent.
- Students have difficulty in expressing their understanding in writing.

274. Physics results are usually below national averages, but the small numbers of candidates make it unsafe to make conclusions or distinguish trends. However, analysis of results shows that students do obtain the full range of grades and clearly achieve what could be expected from them, when their own prior GCSE results are taken into account. Breakdown of the previous A-level results shows that coursework marks are much higher than those for written examinations. This appears to stem from a weakness in students being able to express their understanding in questions requiring longer written answers. Overall, this means that students make satisfactory progress rather than good. The department is beginning to address this problem by putting more emphasis on literacy skills.
275. Currently, there are no students in Year 13. None of the previous small group intended to complete the A-level course and left when they had completed their AS-level course, for example two candidates entered the armed forces. Most students who start the course complete it, and the current group of nine students in Year 12 are focused on obtaining an A-level grade. Observations in class and scrutiny of work and test marks confirm that the Year 12 students have made good progress from their GCSE levels, for example in a lesson observed, students were able to research the workings of a thermistor and use their understanding and skills to test the manufacturer's specifications.
276. Teaching is good overall. Of the three lessons seen, two were good and one was unsatisfactory. The main features of lessons are the careful planning and the use of practical investigations to deepen understanding of the principles and applications of physics in the everyday world. In the good lessons, there was more structure and pace, more was demanded of the students to think and participate in their own learning and there was a final check of understanding. In the unsatisfactory lesson, there was little interaction between the teacher and students, the pace was slow and the students made insufficient gains in learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this is used effectively to ask the probing questions, which extend and deepen students' understanding. Day-to-day assessment is good in the classroom. Demanding homework is regularly set and marked, but there is not always enough written advice to indicate how students could improve or pursue further study.
277. Scrutiny of previous work indicates that students frequently carry out independent research using compact disks, the Internet and textbooks. Some of the work shows that students are not always clear about what they are expected to learn. This occurs when students are given course material that mainly involves following instructions. Students are not required to explain their thinking and understanding frequently enough in writing. There is good emphasis on the need for considering errors, and students can fully explain the reliability of data. Good use is made of computers to present and analyse their work. The quantity and depth of work produced by male and female students are similar.
278. Students learn well. They form good working relationships with each other and their teachers. In consequence, they work well together and are willing to join in discussions without fear of being wrong or being disparaged. Students find the course in advancing physics to be interesting and clearly relevant to the outside world. This interest is reflected in their mature attitudes to their work and study.
279. A new teaching scheme has been introduced, in relation to the advancing physics course, and its delivery is being regularly reviewed to ensure effective teaching and learning. This is a major improvement from the last report. Half-termly reviews and

target setting have been introduced and help students to focus on their learning needs. Some of the learning objectives lack precision. The subject is well managed.

BUSINESS

The focus was on A-level business education. GNVQ business was sampled.

Business education

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching, resources and accommodation.
- The upward trend in standards.
- Shared commitment to improvement in the subject.
- Assessment of students' work and the use of data to plan lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Development of analytical and evaluative skills in assignments and individual study.
- Strategies to ensure full attendance and completion of coursework and assignments.
- Mentoring of students on grade borderlines.

280. In 2001, results at A-level were close to the national average for the higher A and B grades but below for overall A-E grades. In 2000, the results were well below the national average. Over the last four years, girls achieved at a higher level than the boys. In the GNVQ advanced group in 2001, attainment was in line with the national average for pass grades, with a small percentage of merit and distinctions. In both courses, most students achieved well in relation to predicted grades, based on average GCSE grades. In 2001, attainment in the intermediate GNVQ course was satisfactory with three-quarters of the group achieving a pass grade.

281. From observation of lessons and students' files, attainment in both the current Years 12 and 13 AS- and A-level advanced classes is average, with students currently attaining in line with predictions. Both male and female students show a satisfactory understanding of business objectives and organisational structures. They write and organise their notes well, and from evidence in files, higher attaining students in particular have a good knowledge of the marketing function. They use computers and the Internet well to develop independent learning and research skills. A majority of students are able to relate theory to the real world of business by the use of case studies. Good examples were also seen in Year 12 lessons on the location of distribution centres. In Year 13 in a lesson on interest rates, most students were able to understand how changes in rates influence firms' strategies. Weaknesses were observed, however, in many students' understanding of the concept of interest elasticity. Many students also find the analysis and evaluation of some aspects of individual course work difficult. They work well in groups and make satisfactory presentations on their findings. Overall, achievement is good in relation to grades achieved at GCSE.

282. From observations in lessons and from looking at files of work, students in the Years 12 and 13 AVCE groups are also achieving well in relation to predictions based on GCSE performance. They are developing satisfactory independent research skills, for example in work in Year 13 researching good customer service practice in local companies. Most files are organised in a satisfactory way but some are less well planned. Many indicate weaker analysis and evaluative skills that affect progress. Most students display

a satisfactory knowledge of human resource management. In Year 12, a majority of students have settled down positively to the course and are achieving well in relation to predictions, They do, however, find some aspects of the course difficult, for example in understanding the reasons for market failure in the railway industry. In the intermediate GNVQ group, students are achieving in line with expectations, but in lessons observed and from looking at work, they do display an inability to work without considerable teacher input. In a lesson on customer services, they displayed good oral skills and were able to present logical arguments.

283. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good, with a high percentage of very good practice. Lessons and assignments are very carefully planned and tasks are used well to show students how to apply their learning. Most students work well and this, when combined with the good quality of teaching, results in good learning. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and level of expectation. Frequent opportunities are provided for the development of independent learning skills. Teachers carry out accurate assessments; marking is very thorough and helpful comments are provided to assist learning. Teachers are well qualified and have very useful experience gained in the business world. Suitable lesson objectives are set and a very good range of case studies is used to raise students' awareness of the real business work. Students are helped to develop independent learning techniques and research into the real world of business. Good support is given to the students whose understanding is weaker.

284. Leadership and management are very good indeed. Teaching schemes and policies are thorough and helpful, ensuring that the requirements of the external examination boards are followed. Teachers work closely and effectively together, reviewing assessments and lesson planning. The last report was very complimentary and the department has continued to work hard to ensure students achieve as well as possible. The creation of a teaching and learning atmosphere, to match model business practices is a strength of the department. Assessment is thorough in all courses. Resources and accommodation are very good and assist learning considerably. Attendance at revision sessions is not however always good and mentoring of students on the border of their predicted grades is not sufficiently rigorous.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography. The college does not teach any other humanities subjects in the sixth form.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in the A-level course are above average.
- Students achieve well; fieldwork assignments are often of the highest standard.
- Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and lessons are planned thoroughly.

Areas for improvement

- Students to be more involved in class discussion.

285. The provision in geography caters for ten students following AS- and A-level courses. Most students have all achieved grades A or B at GCSE. Two further students follow an Advanced Vocational Course in Sports, Leisure and Recreation.

286. Examination results overall are above average. The most recent GCE A-level examination results were average. All but one of the students gained a pass grade. Four students reached above the national level to maintain the grade pass they attained at GCSE; two females attained grade A and a male grade B. The majority of students were female and were all successful. AS-level results were well above average, with two grade A and one grade B pass. All students completed the course.
287. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work confirm that the standards achieved by students on the AS-level and the A-level courses are above average. The majority of students began their courses with above average levels of GCSE attainment. In the recent A-level examinations, the majority of students maintained or improved their GCSE grades at A-level. This is evidence of good achievement.
288. Students show a good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied in physical and human geography. They work hard to research the themes and use the Internet very competently to select relevant information in preparation for lessons and to extend their individual studies. Their map work and use of data are very good and students use these skills very well to support their fieldwork assignments. The content and presentation of these are of the highest standard.
289. Overall the teaching is very good. All teachers have a very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned to lead students through the development of a lesson topic effectively, both by what they say and by checking frequently the students' understanding of what they have learned. This is very supportive, particularly for students in the earlier part of their AS-level course who find it more difficult to draw together the many strands of the subject into their thinking and writing. Extended pieces of work are marked regularly and teachers give clear and accurate judgements about the quality of their work. These help students to improve. For example, in the return of an examination script answer, the teacher compared the students' with the examiner's suggested response. Students understood how best to improve their work although too few opportunities were taken for them to discuss what they had learned. In one lesson, the teacher promoted a deeper understanding and knowledge of the cause and effects of deforestation throughout the world. The teacher encouraged the class to work in three groups. They researched a case study and then prepared a succinct mini-presentation and spoke confidently from their summary of what they had learned. One group incorporated a graph.
290. Students learn very well, lesson by lesson. They are attentive and work very effectively in response to very good quality teaching. Most students can talk authoritatively on aspects of the course they have studied to link, for example, their field study forest soil profiles with examples of deforestation in England. Students enjoy their practical and fieldwork assignments and benefit greatly from the opportunities provided for them to observe, to investigate hypotheses and to conduct people interviews. The quality of fieldwork assignments is very high. Student work files demonstrate sophisticated recording techniques. These include ICT and hand-drawn maps and diagrams. Oral work and the style of writing show a greater degree of maturity from Year 12 to Year 13. Year 12 students made 'a great leap forward' to build positively on GCSE work. In a class, AS-level students compare demographic changes in the growth of population structures in Britain and India. They use sophisticated techniques to predict changes in the population structure and support their findings with clear and concise written statements. The very good learning in lessons leads to good achievement overall,

because students do not always consolidate the work enough to achieve the highest grades of which they are capable.

291. Work in the subject is well led and managed. The good sequencing of topics ensures students are building on their prior learning very effectively. Case study materials are reviewed regularly and the department maintains an extensive library of Internet and publication references. Students are fully aware of the targets set and they seek to attain them. The relative performance of girls and boys is monitored well and all are encouraged to achieve as well as they can. Currently, there are no ethnic minority students. The two teachers are experienced in the delivery of sixth-form studies and work very well together. Regular discussions enable teachers to compare and record their experiences of the new A-level units and help them share best practice in teaching.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English but modern foreign languages were also sampled. A French lesson and a German lesson were observed. Teaching in these subjects is at least satisfactory and students are learning well as a result. The very small numbers mean that students benefit from many opportunities to speak the foreign language. In English, students were examined at A-level in 2001. This year there is no group following the course in Year 13. Both lessons taught to Year 12 during the period of the inspection were observed.

English

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning produce good results.
- Students benefit from good levels of guidance.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion gaining the highest grade at A-level is below average.

292. Results at A-level in 2001 matched the national average except for the proportion gaining grades A and B, which was below average. All students passed the examination and gained results that matched and sometimes exceeded expectation based upon their earlier attainment.

293. There are no students studying English in Year 13. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Students in Year 12 have adjusted well to the demands of study at this level. Students make effective use of both electronic and printed text for research purposes. They are confident in reporting their opinions and judgements to colleagues. Because relationships between students and with teachers are positive and supportive, students are willing to explore possible interpretations when analysing texts and contribute well to discussions. Written work, for example on the sonnets of Donne and Joyce's 'Dubliners,' shows a good grasp of material, a developing ability to organise it effectively and increasingly confident expression of personal opinion rather than the repetition of accepted interpretations. Students recognise the importance of supporting judgements by reference to evidence so that they are learning to speak and write convincingly. The writing of some is marred by inaccuracies of expression, which can distract the reader from the merits of the work.

294. Students respond positively to the guidance provided by teachers in lessons and on their written work. For example, the early tendency of some to lose critical focus and

slip into re-telling the narrative has now been virtually eliminated. Recognition of the unacceptability of the superficial has been established. Positive attitudes reflect good levels of motivation. Most of the students intend to continue to A-level next year. Achievement, in relation to students' previous standards, is good.

295. On the evidence of work seen and lessons observed, the quality of teaching is good and has some very good features. Teachers have very good knowledge of texts and of the requirements of the courses of study being followed. They expect students to be partners in their learning. In lessons seen, students were asked to identify the complex experiences of the central character in an extract from Faulkes' 'Birdsong' and to consider how 'Winter's Tale' might be a tragi-comedy. In both lessons, students worked well in groups, explored in depth and were able to identify conclusions and possibilities before presenting their views to the class. Teachers were skilful in asking questions, which not only challenged but also helped students to clarify and extend their understanding. They have high expectations of effort and achievement.
296. Sixth-form courses are well managed and satisfactorily resourced.