

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WELLAND PARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Market Harborough

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120246

Principal: Mrs Susan Fennell

Reporting inspector: Dr K C Thomas  
3390

Dates of inspection: 28 February – 2 March 2000

Inspection number: 215529

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 14

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Welland Park Road  
Market Harborough  
Leicestershire

Postcode: LE16 9DR

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr O de Rousset-Hall

Date of previous inspection: 5 June 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kenneth C Thomas	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it?
			What should the school do to improve further?
			How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements.
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Daljit Singh	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
John Brigden	Team inspector	Art	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Valerie Banks	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Graham Laws	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
		Special educational needs	
Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English	
		English as an additional language	
Thelma McIntosh	Team inspector	Music	
Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Physical education	
Clive Potter	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
Andrew Lagden	Team inspector	History	
Alan Quinn	Team inspector	Science	

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Welland Park College provides education for both boys and girls in the 11 – 14 age range. The college draws most of its students from the town of Market Harborough and the surrounding villages. The college is increasing in popularity and the number of students in the college has risen since the last inspection. The total number of students presently on roll is 577 and it is predicted that the number will rise in future years. It is anticipated that as a consequence of new house building in the area the numbers of students in the college will increase. The proportion of students with English as an additional language at 1.7 per cent is slightly above the national average, but nearly all of these students speak English fluently. Although the overall attainment of students coming into the college is above the national average, the attainment of a significant number of students is below average. The proportions of students with special educational needs, at 15.9 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average, while those with statements, at 3.6 per cent, is above average. The proportion of students who are entitled to free college meals, at 6.9 per cent, is below average, and lower than in the last college year (1998-99), when it was 8.65 per cent.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Welland Park College is an effective educational institution. It is strongly led, standards are above average and good teaching enables students to make the most of the good opportunities provided. Resources are well managed and the college provides good value for money, within a supportive context.

#### What the school does well

- Standards of attainment are above average in most subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and very good in modern foreign languages and music.
- Provision for special educational needs is very good.
- Relationships are very good and students' personal development is well supported.
- Leadership and management are very good: the principal is outstandingly good.
- There is a high commitment to continuous improvement.
- The college receives good support from parents.

#### What could be improved

- Standards of attainment in information technology.
- The consistency with which college policies are implemented in some departments.
- The balance of the curriculum.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected 5 – 9 June 1995 and has made good progress since then. Standards of attainment have risen in line with national trends, the attendance rate is higher and the quality of teaching is better. The key issues identified for action in the last inspection report have all been tackled systematically and provision for higher attaining students has improved. Through the very effective leadership of the principal and senior management team, together with effective support from the governors, and good planning, the college has developed clear strategies for raising standards and is well placed to continue to improve its provision and the standards students achieve.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>  well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
End of Key Stage 3 tests	B	B	B	D	

Overall attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was above average, compared with all schools nationally, but below average compared with similar schools.

Results in English, science and mathematics were above the national average, but below average in comparison with similar schools. However, comparative analyses of the results obtained in the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, taken in 1996, with those obtained by the same students in 1999 show that the standards attained in 1999 are in line with expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music are above national expectations, while standards of attainment in physical education and religious education are in line with expectations. Standards of attainment in information technology in 1999 were below expectations.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have positive attitudes to the college. Students enjoy coming to the college and this is evident in vast majority of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good and often very good in lessons. The majority of students behave in a considerate and orderly manner and show respect for others in lessons and around the college.
Personal development and relationships	The very good quality of the relationships amongst all groups is a strength of the college. Students are willing to take responsibility and respond positively to the many opportunities provided. This has a good effect on their personal development.
Attendance	Above average and higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average.

Students are highly motivated, keen and enthusiastic about learning, both in college time and extra-curricular activities. They contribute well to the life of the college and regularly perform in assemblies, in the orchestra and choir, and in sports activities.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years
Lessons seen overall	Good, often very good with examples of excellent teaching in music and modern foreign languages.

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and very good in music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of the 109 lessons observed. It is good or better in almost two-thirds of lessons. There are examples of excellence in teaching in music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is unsatisfactory in information technology where most of the unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. The effectiveness of students' learning follows a similar pattern, and they make good progress, overall. Lessons are planned so students of all abilities can learn effectively although there is a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in some lessons. Good use is made of a range of teaching methods and resources for learning and good account is taken of the particular needs of students with special educational needs. They benefit from effective support and as a consequence are able to participate fully in lessons. Homework is set regularly in most subjects but not always used to consolidate and extend students learning. Students' work is marked regularly but does not always provide students with adequate information on what they must do in order to raise the standard of their work.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory and enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The progress of students is carefully monitored and they are provided with effective support. Students understand what they should do to improve.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few students with English as an additional language have no language difficulties that require additional support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision for moral, social and cultural development is good with some very good features, particularly in provision for students' social development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not being met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The college cares very well for its students. Awareness of health and safety, and child protection, is good as is the support and guidance offered to students and the monitoring of academic performance and personal development.

Curriculum provision in the college is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements in all subjects. The curriculum is broad and students are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum, including religious education. However, the lack of continuous provision for creative subjects such as drama and dance, causes a lack of balance in the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is good and a large number of students participate in a range of musical and sporting activities and visits to places of interest at home and abroad. Provision for students' personal development is a strength of the college.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Leadership is very good and provides a clear focus on raising standards. Delegation to staff with management responsibilities is good and there are effective follow-up procedures to ensure that tasks are completed satisfactorily.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective and displays a high level of commitment to taking the college forward. They are well informed, have high expectations and monitor progress carefully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	College planning for improvement is very well organised and takes good account of standards and progress.
The strategic use of resources	The college makes the most of its resources and provides good value for money.

The principal provides excellent leadership and a clear educational direction for the college. The senior management team has been restructured and management roles and responsibilities have been redefined in order to ensure that there is a constant focus on raising standards. Good teamwork is a strong feature in all aspects of the life of the college. The college has a strong positive ethos and provides a well-ordered learning environment. The overall quality of management provided by heads of department is good with examples of very good management in music, modern foreign languages and special educational needs. However, the co-ordination of information technology across the college is unsatisfactory. The governing body is effective and supportive. The quality of financial planning is good and the principles of best value for money are applied in the use of its resources. Staff are appropriately qualified either by subject specialism or wide experience in the main teaching

areas. The accommodation enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. The college benefits from its status as a community college with the provision of some very good dual-use accommodation. However, there is insufficient laboratory accommodation for science. The overall provision of resources is satisfactory and the college library is well-resourced and well used.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college expects students to work hard and achieve his or her best.</li> <li>• The progress made by students.</li> <li>• The college helps students to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The good behaviour in the college.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of work in information technology.</li> <li>• The curriculum information provided to parents.</li> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>

There is a good measure of support for the college from parents and inspectors endorse parents' positive views. There is a need to raise standards in information technology and for the college to provide parents with more detailed information on the curriculum. Some parents had mixed feelings about homework and extra-curricular activities: inspectors found homework to be set regularly in most subjects, but not always in accordance with the college timetable and homework tasks are not always used to consolidate and extend students' learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in which substantial numbers of students participate.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 14, at the end of Key Stage 3, the standards of attainment of both boys and girls in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were above the national average. In comparison with similar schools overall attainment in the core subjects in 1999 was below the national average. However, comparative analyses of the results obtained in the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, taken in 1996, with those obtained by the same students in 1999 show that the standards attained in 1999 are in line with expectations. Examination of results over the past four years shows that although there is a tendency for girls to outperform boys in English, there are no consistent differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics. However, in science, the performance of boys has declined over recent years, whilst that of girls has improved to the point where the performance of boys and girls is broadly similar.
2. Inspection evidence confirms teacher assessments which show that by the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music are above national expectations, while standards of attainment in physical education are in line with expectations. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Teacher assessments show that standards of achievement in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 had declined to be below the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards of attainment of students currently in the college are generally in line with national expectations. However, these standards are not as high as they should be. There are no consistent differences in the performance of boys and girls across subjects. Students with special educational needs are achieving satisfactory standards and by the end of the key stage almost all students achieve at least level 4 of the National Curriculum in both English and mathematics.
3. Students' standards of literacy are above average and are being further improved through the implementation of effective literacy strategies in all subjects. The senior management team display a very good understanding of the implications of the national literacy initiatives both for the curriculum and for teaching methods, and are providing effective leadership in the development of strategies to raise standards of literacy. For example, the reading standards of students with special educational needs have shown considerable improvement as a consequence of participation in a targeted literacy project. During the last year, subject specific key words have been identified in order that students' learning can be consolidated by their consistent reinforcement. Analyses of the reading levels of textbooks and other reading materials regularly used in lessons have been carried out in order to ensure that the reading materials are matched to students' reading abilities. Also, the humanities department has introduced a number of strategies to extend the range and quality of students' written work. The college's literacy strategy is underpinned by the provision of one period per week of English time in Year 7 and Year 8, which is dedicated to the improvement of basic skills and focused primarily on reading and spelling. Most students speak fluently and with a level of confidence that is consistent with and often above expectations for their ages. They listen and talk well to each other when engaged in small group and paired work.
4. Standards of numeracy are above average. Numeracy reinforcement is part of the mathematics scheme of work and mental arithmetic skills are regularly practised as part of mathematics lessons. Examples of the effective use of numerical skills were observed in a number of lessons. In science, for example, students draw graphs, collect data and display results in a variety of different ways and can measure angles accurately when dealing with light rays under reflection and refraction. Measuring and calculating skills are used effectively in design and technology and interesting use is made of pie charts in modern foreign languages. There is no evidence that calculators are over-used by students in any subject and when calculators are used, they are used competently. There is no college numeracy policy and there has not been an audit of the use of numeracy skills across the curriculum. However, there is no indication that this is having any adverse effect on students' standards of numeracy.

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

5. The attitudes and behaviour of students, including those with special educational needs, are good. The substantial majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that their children enjoy coming to college and this is evident in most lessons. Students show that they are keen to learn and make good efforts to achieve their learning goals. They sustain concentration, respond well to challenges and are prepared to persevere when work is difficult. Relationships are very good and students with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. This has a significant positive effect on standards of attainment. In English lessons, for example, students show that they are prepared to use their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. This is evident in the great deal of time and effort that students put into their independent homework projects, many of which are of very high quality. In mathematics, students settle to work quickly and their helpful attitudes to learning enable lessons to proceed at a good pace. They are keen to ask questions to confirm their understanding and higher attaining students often use questioning effectively to extend their knowledge and understanding. The attitudes of most students in science are good. They are largely co-operative, follow instructions well and stick to the tasks set by teachers. However, a small number of students in one Year 7 lesson were unco-operative and did not respond readily to the instructions of the teacher. In art, students show that they value the help they receive from teachers and enjoy their art lessons. Average and higher attaining students, in particular, show a good level of initiative to solve the problems they are set. Similarly in design and technology, students demonstrate much enjoyment and tenacity when making artefacts and take pride in their work. Their sense of commitment is a pleasure to observe, both when they work independently and in small groups. In geography, students are able to concentrate for sustained periods with the result that there is a good working atmosphere in lessons. Students' attentiveness and enthusiasm is evident in music and this can be seen in the use that students make of the music department at breaks and after-college when a significant number of students routinely use the resources of the department. However, the overall attitudes of students in information technology are unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 9. Although in many information technology lessons students demonstrate positive attitudes, sustain concentration and work hard to complete the tasks set, the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a small, but significant, number of students affects the overall levels of attainment and progress.
6. Most students are courteous, respectful and friendly and there are few incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Students generally observe the college's code of conduct and respond positively to the system of rewards and sanctions. The challenging behaviour of a small number of students is such that it inevitably leads to exclusion from college. As a consequence, during the last college year there were 22 fixed period exclusions, which involved eight boys and one girl. The number of fixed period exclusions is broadly in line with the number found in secondary schools of similar size. There were no permanent exclusions in the last college year. The college has a clear anti-bullying policy and takes a serious view of any such incidents. Students interviewed during the week of the inspection reported that while there had been occasional incidents of bullying, these had been dealt with effectively by the college. They were also confident that any future incidents would be dealt with equally effectively.
7. Students' personal development and the quality of the relationships amongst all groups is a strength of the college. Students work, study and play well together and are prepared to listen to and show respect for the views of others. This has a positive effect on standards of attainment. This willingness to work well together is particularly evident in music where students co-operate well when they are working together in small groups. They are courteous towards each other and listen carefully to each other's ideas. They show concern for others by controlling the volume levels to minimise interference with other lessons. In English, students listen carefully to the contributions of others and in science students demonstrate that they are willing to help each other when engaged in practical work. The very good quality of the relationships between teachers and students provides students with the confidence to share their own knowledge and experiences, secure in the knowledge that teachers will value their contributions. This was evident, for example, in a Year 8 geography lesson about immigration, in which students engaged in a sensible discussion on racism. Similarly in religious education, students are prepared to reflect on their own values, for example, in discussing personal freedom. Boys and girls readily collaborate with each other when working in small groups and students are ready to volunteer to read aloud or report back their findings to the class as a whole.
8. The willingness of students to show initiative and to exercise responsibility is evident when they act as tutor group representatives and members of the college council. Students also behave in a mature and responsible way when handling computers, when working laboratories

and workshops in science and design and technology, and when handling equipment in physical education.

9. The college attendance rate in the last college year was above the national average and has been consistently so since the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, the college continues to work hard to improve attendance and the attendance rate shows a steady rise over the past three years.
10. The college has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Attitudes and behaviour were identified as a strength of the college in the last inspection report and the need to maintain the positive attitudes of the students to the life and work of the college was identified as a key action point. This has been successfully achieved. The generally good attitudes and behaviour, and very good relationships have been sustained, while the attendance rate has been improved.

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

11. The overall quality of teaching is good and very good in music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of the 109 lessons observed. It is good in almost two-thirds of lessons. There are examples of excellence in teaching in music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is unsatisfactory in information technology.
12. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and draw on this well to extend students' learning. This is evident in mathematics, for example, where a good subject knowledge enables teachers to relate the topics being covered closely to the experiences of the students. The teachers' secure knowledge of the subject in art enables students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the work of notable artists and the ideas and concepts associated with different artistic styles and conventions. Year 8 students, for example, produced striking abstract pastel drawings after they had looked at the work of the artist Marc Chagall. In geography teachers use their subject knowledge well to question, challenge and develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills and in history, good teaching is based on a confident knowledge of the subject and current affairs. This good subject knowledge is also reflected in well-structured schemes of work which effectively support some non-specialist teaching in religious education and geography. However, there are weaknesses in teaching in some of the discrete basic skills lessons, which are taught mainly by non-specialist teachers in Year 7 and Year 8. Not all of these teachers have the necessary subject expertise to give students advice about the suitability of reading books and to extend students' understanding of spelling rules and the connections between words. However, teachers are generally competent in the development of basic skills in the context of their own subjects. In science, for example the teaching of basic skills is competently handled as is the development of numeracy skills in subjects such as design and technology and geography. Writing skills are a focus for teaching in the humanities and teachers use a number of strategies to extend the range and quality of students' written work.
13. Lesson planning is good. Most teachers are well prepared and this leads to brisk starts to lessons. In most lessons, students are clear about what they are doing and fully involved in their learning. Questioning is well used to reinforce learning. In science, for example, the effective use of questions at the beginning of lessons helps students to recall previous work and to set the learning objectives for the lesson. At the same time, students are themselves keen to ask questions to confirm their understanding and higher attaining students often use questioning effectively to extend their own knowledge and understanding. Classroom management is mostly good. Teachers have generally appropriate expectations and keep lessons moving at a good pace. When these features predominate then students learn well. In English, for example, teachers' good classroom management helps to create a learning environment where all students, including those with special educational needs and lower attaining students, feel secure enough to make suggestions, hypothesise and take risks knowing that their contributions will be accepted and valued. This was evident in a Year 8 lesson, for example, where the study of Adrian Mitchell's poem, 'Back to the Playground Blues' led to a discussion on the effects of bullying. In lessons when they are presented with really challenging work, students enjoy the intellectual rigour and rise to the challenge. This is a particular feature of the high quality teaching in modern foreign languages and music. In modern languages, high expectations predominate and lessons proceed at a good pace. This was evident, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where students were challenged by the consistent use of the foreign language and stimulated and motivated by the unrelenting pace of the

lesson. In music, the teacher's high expectations, together with a good-humoured style of teaching, helps to establish a learning environment which is characterised by very good levels of co-operation and above average standards of performance. Similarly, the best teaching in history, inspires, challenges and enthuses students. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson, for example, where the use of historical films and effective questioning by the teacher ensured that students of all attainment levels participated successfully in a class debate. Where teaching does not reach this standard then this level of challenge is not always apparent. In mathematics, for example, higher attaining students are insufficiently challenged in some lessons and are often given additional work of the same nature rather than work that would extend and stimulate them. This is also the case in some Year 7 lessons in geography, for example, where higher attaining students are insufficiently challenged because undue time is taken consolidating topics such as mapskills, which have already been covered in the primary school.

14. Good use is made of a range of teaching methods and resources for learning. In music, for example, the effective use of material written by the teacher for class performances of the 'Can-Can' and the 'Trumpet Voluntary', helped to improve students' performance skills by providing different levels of challenge and enriched their aural experience by using a variety of different instruments for melodic and harmonic parts. However, the predominant method of teaching in mathematics is one in which there is a heavy dependence on the teacher, with insufficient opportunity for students to engage in independent work. Resources are well used in geography to interest students and provide variety in students' learning experiences. The white-board is used effectively as a focus to display information, build up lists of key words, and summarise the main learning points of lessons. Activities are carefully chosen to consolidate and build on what students have learnt previously. Effective use is also made of timed deadlines which encourages students to concentrate as, for example, in a Year 8 'timed' investigative task about endangered species. However, not all lessons are well timed in science with the consequence that insufficient time is left to summarise and consolidate the key learning points at the end of some lessons. Also, in some mathematics lessons, students are kept on the same task for too long with a consequent decline in students' interest and enthusiasm.
15. Unsatisfactory teaching in information technology is associated with low expectations, undemanding work, and weaknesses in class management. Students' work is often not marked and when it is marked, students are not provided with clear guidance on how the quality of the work can be improved. As a consequence, although students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is satisfactory in some areas, for example, in designing a page layout and importing graphics, this is often as a result of the use of computers at home rather than the planned outcomes of information technology lessons. Many students reasoning skills are weak and they are unsure about their own levels of attainment, and the ways in which they can improve their work. This is particularly evident in Year 9. The marking of students' work is well used in several subjects, such as English, art and music, for example, to give students clear information on the standard of their work and on what they have to do in order to improve the quality of their work. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in mathematics where marking is generally encouraging but lacks the constructive comments needed to enable students to improve. Similarly, although students' work is marked regularly in geography and religious education, there is a lack of consistency between teachers and the marking does not help students to see how they can improve. Consistency in marking has also been identified a weakness and so an area for development in modern foreign languages. Although homework is set regularly in many subjects it is not used to consolidate and extend students' learning in science and in some, such as geography, it not always set in accordance with the homework timetable.
16. The quality of teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Students with special educational needs are generally taught in normal classes. In most of these lessons, teachers prepare work to match the targets in students' individual education plans. This is particularly successful in English lessons where teachers have a good knowledge of students' targets and work closely with support teachers and support assistants. In subjects where students are taught in ability groups, such as mathematics and French, the group tasks are carefully designed to take account of the prior attainment of these students with the consequence that the lesson activities are stimulating and challenging. However, in science where students are taught in mixed ability groups, the work is not always well matched to the attainment levels of students with special needs and the subject targets in students' individual education plans are insufficiently precise. When students are withdrawn from lessons and taught in small groups, they receive good support for specific skill development. Support

within normal lessons is effective and often enlightened. The access to the curriculum staff maintain detailed records of progress and target precise needs in an imaginative way. Their interventions are invariably well timed since they are fully aware of teachers' lesson plans. Most students with special educational needs are confident and often ask thoughtful questions in lessons, which help to consolidate their own understanding of the work being undertaken.

17. The college has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection report. The quality of teaching, which was then judged to be sound, is now good. The strengths identified in the previous report have been sustained, while improvements have been made in the areas of weakness. For example, questioning is now well used in most subjects to extend students' thinking and to develop an independent spirit of enquiry through open discussion. Also, subject teachers are now fully involved in the construction of the individual education plans for students with special educational needs. However, there is still room for improvement with regard to the level of challenge offered to higher attaining students in some lessons and the use of homework to consolidate and extend learning in some subjects.

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

18. The overall curriculum provision in the college is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements in all subjects with equality of opportunity for all students. The curriculum is broad and students are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum, including religious education. However, the lack of continuous provision for creative subjects such as drama and dance, causes a lack of balance in the curriculum. All students take French and the higher attaining students have the opportunity to study German. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject but is not used enough in other subjects. The programme for personal and social education is carefully planned, enabling it to be taught satisfactorily across the college. It covers; sex, health and drugs education and involves people from outside the college with expertise in these areas. It includes good provision for careers education which is appreciated by students and prepares them well for transfer to the upper school. It starts in Year 9 with a module about the choice of careers and subjects for Key Stage 4. When making their choices, students make good use of the careers service and the information provided by the upper school. Students find that the 'Enterprise Day' run by local firms provides a useful insight into working environments. The college has a homework timetable and students are expected to do regular homework to complement their studies. However, the homework timetable is not always followed and students report that they find some of the homework lacks challenge.
19. All subjects have more time to teach the curriculum than at the last inspection. The total teaching time of 25 hours is now in line with DfEE requirements. While most subjects have sufficient time to cover the curriculum there are imbalances. The allocation for English, mathematics and science is generous, reflecting the college's emphasis on the core skills. The time for art and design and technology is below the national average in Year 9 and is affecting the progress of students in these subjects.
20. The curriculum builds upon good links with the primary schools from which it draws its students. It is planned effectively in most subjects to ensure continuity and progression and there is comprehensive support and guidance at the points of transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Effective liaison with the upper school ensures that there is a smooth transition and continuity of provision as students move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Curriculum planning procedures are good and plans are effectively implemented in most subjects. This provides good support for students of all levels of attainment. Provision for students with special educational needs is effectively co-ordinated by the access to the curriculum department. The department provides both in-class support and withdrawal teaching as well as specialist advice to subject teachers. A key strategy in provision for students with special educational needs has been the reduction of class sizes in order to allow all staff to address the needs of students with special educational needs most effectively. In order to support this strategy, staff development time has been devoted to the development of appropriate teaching methods to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment. Included in these is a college programme for literacy, which is designed to improve reading and writing in all subjects and there are indications that this has had positive effects on students' reading and writing skills. The needs of higher attaining students have been catered for through a specific development plan for these students. As part of this plan, the college has developed a good system for identifying higher attaining students and strategies are being

developed to accommodate their learning needs. For example, during the last two years the college has run Year 9 extension English classes for these students, to which an extension class in science was added last year. In addition, a group of students have been identified as higher attainers in a number of subjects and extension activities of a different kind are offered for this group. Examples of these activities include, participation in a national newspaper competition about the eclipse of the sun, a constituency surgery with the local Member of Parliament, a visit to the Leicester Space Centre, mathematical research, the construction of web-sites and research on Welland Park in order to make a book for the millennium year. The college is also investigating the possibility of providing a GCSE course in information technology for a number of higher attaining students. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting spoke favourably of the provision made for students with special educational needs and of the benefits of the enrichment classes for higher attaining students.

21. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are popular with students and often closely linked with class work. Mathematics, for example, provides an extra-curricular session for students of all abilities and information technology offers the use of its facilities as an extra-curricular activity, both at lunchtimes and after college. Computers and study help are also available in the library every evening. Approximately 90 per cent of students participate in a wide range of sporting activities, including inter-form and inter-school matches and a number of representative sports at County level. Music provision is particularly good and noteworthy for the standards achieved and the large numbers of students who study an instrument and take part in the choir, orchestra and instrumental ensembles in the college and the community. These activities are supported by the individual instrumental lessons, which the governors have agreed to subsidise from the school budget in order to reduce the costs to parents. A number of students attend the Youth Theatre, which is based at the college. Included in the visits made by students are a Year 7 residential visit in Northumbria, visits to the theatre, art galleries, historical sites and scientific events as well as journeys abroad. The range of extra-curricular activities available to students is increased by access to the very good community education programme available in the college.
22. The college is very successful in meeting its commitment to establish a caring and supportive community and one that allows for the development of students' personal qualities and their sense of personal and social responsibility. Students' personal development and the relationships they establish within the college are very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues contribute to the development of these, but there is no college policy that would serve as a basis for providing and evaluating these aspects of college life.
23. Overall provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. However, the important contribution of providing a daily act of collective worship is not being fully implemented in line with statutory requirements. It is intended that this requirement should be met through a well-planned scheme for assemblies, which incorporates a 'Thought for the Week' for use in both assemblies and form periods. However, not all teachers follow the programme during form periods. Also, the balance of themes and religious festivals included in the scheme does not meet the requirement of being wholly or mainly Christian. The assemblies observed made a valuable contribution to spiritual development in considering the meaning of beauty through readings, reflection and prayer. Students were led to an understanding that beauty is not just external but can come from within a person. This theme was effectively taken up in two form periods observed in Year 8 and Year 9 but omitted in another case. The generally positive response from students to the college's ethos has a spiritual dimension but overall there are limited opportunities for reflecting on the mysteries and wonders of life and the natural world. The opportunities for development of personal beliefs and a knowledge of religious and other value systems is well supported in religious education but, while English and, to a certain extent art, make significant contributions, provision is not clearly evident across the whole curriculum.
24. Provision for moral development is good. The college has clear expectations that the majority of students accept as a framework of values. The ethos promotes respect, courtesy, consideration and co-operation, much of which was evident during the inspection. All staff promote good relationships both in the classroom and about the college generally and give unambiguous signals about acceptable attitudes and behaviour. These are reinforced from time to time in assemblies and form periods, alongside broader moral questions. Moral issues are raised and discussed in some, but not all, subjects. They feature prominently in personal and social education and consideration of moral questions arise quite naturally in religious education and in studying English literature. In religious education, classes have considered, for example, how a moral code develops and the nature of good and evil. Consideration of



environmental issues arise in geography and science. In terms of personal behaviour it is apparent in various subjects, such as music and physical education, that students work well together, show reliability and develop a sense of team spirit and fair play. Students are encouraged, but also take the initiative, to consider the plight of others through charitable work, both locally and internationally. Gift boxes were collected and sent to Romania last Christmas and money raised in activity week goes to the local 'Homestart' charity.

25. The college makes very good provision for social development. The large majority of students relate well to each other. Paired and group work in many lessons, projects, team games, visits and work in the community all contribute very effectively to the development of respect for other people, differing views and the need to compromise. Social skills are further advanced for many through the good range of extra-curricular activities. The opportunities for taking responsibility in the college are varied. Examples include, Year 9 students acting as guides to visitors, Year 8 students working with physically and mentally disabled adults, and with younger children from the community. Students from all years offer their services voluntarily to assist in college events such as parents' evenings. Classes show initiative, whenever they are given the opportunity, in organising such things as raising funds for charity. Most students show a responsible attitude in their commitment to their work and many show initiative in their learning. All subjects contribute through the many collaborative class activities that require co-operation and awareness of others. Aspects of the curriculum develop understanding of social structures in society. Examples can be found in personal and social education, which includes topics such as the law, government and social responsibility and in religious education classes where consideration is given to the need for structure in society.
26. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. The curriculum broadly supports the development of students' own culture, particularly in personal and social education, English, history, religious education and music but other subjects need to make a more obvious impact. There are visits to theatres, galleries and other local cultural events but the number is small. This is partly because of financial constraints. Opportunities to experience other cultures are more apparent but they also need to be extended. In religious education students have opportunities to study other faiths and good links are established with the local Hindu, Chinese and Jewish communities. The literature covered in English draws on and reflects a variety of cultures. In history and geography, economic and political systems, populations and cultures of different countries are studied. A wide range of materials and activities is employed in modern foreign languages, alongside overseas trips, which help to broaden students' awareness of French and other European cultures.
27. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Statutory requirements are now met in information technology and there is enough time in religious education to meet the demands of the Agreed Syllabus. A co-ordinated approach to planning, both within the college and with its link schools, has led to greater curriculum continuity between key stages, although provision for art and design and technology in Year 9 still affects continuity.

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

28. The college takes its responsibilities for child protection and students' welfare very seriously and has established good procedures for ensuring the protection and welfare of students. The college provides a supportive environment in which to learn. Staff have a very good knowledge of individual students and their particular social and educational needs. This knowledge underpins the college's provision for student's personal development, which is a strength of the college. Both parents and students are appreciative of this aspect of the education that the college provides.
29. Continuity in care is built on the role of the form tutors who stay with their forms for the three years students are in the college. Students are in contact with their form tutors twice each day for registrations and tutor time and for their weekly personal, social and health education lessons. The roles of form tutors and heads of year have been extended over the last two years to include the monitoring of students' academic progress in addition to their pastoral concerns. This change is seen as being essential for the development of a more complete view of students' personal development and fundamental to the raising of standards. As a consequence, a good deal of staff development time has been devoted to the preparation of tutors for this wider role.
30. Overall procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. However,

there are inconsistencies in the use made of assessment information to inform teaching and curriculum planning. The college is efficient in identifying and collecting information about the strengths and weaknesses of its students; discussing them with students themselves, and with parents and other agencies. A very good system is used to collect and analyse assessment information about students on entry to the college, including end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, reading scores for Year 7 and the use and analysis of Mid Years Information Systems (MIDYIS) base line tests. This information is also very useful because it shows the fluctuations from year to year in the attainment levels of the college intake. In subject areas across the college, there are some examples of good assessment procedures but there is also variation in the quality of practice. Where practice is generally good, for example in English, key pieces of work for assessment are built into the scheme of work and procedures ensure that teachers apply commonly agreed standards. Marking and grading of students' work is effective in subjects such as art and music where students play a part in assessing their work and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback is good in some subjects such as modern foreign languages because students understand how their college grade relates to a National Curriculum level of attainment.

31. Overall, the use of assessment information is satisfactory but there is variation in the way National Curriculum level statements are used to give students clear expectations about standards. Consequently, the use of target setting, ongoing assessment and students' self-assessment are not used sufficiently and focused on the process of improving students' attainment. The college is effective when data is collected and analysed about students' prior attainment to set attainment targets, particularly for students in Year 8. A rigorous process is used to forecast students' end of key stage attainment in National Curriculum subjects and to set a realistic but ambitious challenge for each individual student. Target setting by subject teachers is at an early stage of development and is not being used with sufficient skill in all departments to inform teaching and curriculum planning. There is inconsistency across subjects in the way 'action targets' are set and used with individual and groups of students. Good examples are evident where subject departments use what they know about students' attainment in order to accelerate their rate of progress and improve their level of attainment. For example in mathematics and modern foreign languages the performance of students in the middle and higher bands of attainment is being addressed. Detailed records are kept about students' progress and attainment and by the end of the key stage the majority of departments have formed a reliable and accurate picture about the standards of students' work. End of key stage assessment is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. A number of subjects use samples of work, that are given a National Curriculum level and compiled into a portfolio, to assist with standardising their marking and grading. A careful analysis of end of key stage results is helping subjects such as English and science to review trends in student attainment and to evaluate planning and teaching methods.
32. Assessment information is used efficiently to prepare reports for parents and for the students' Records of Achievement. Overall, reports to parents are good although the college has recognised that there is some variation in the quality and usefulness of the information provided between subjects. Reports are most effective when subject comments provide a clear indication about a student's subject strengths, how these relate to National Curriculum levels and what needs to be done by a student to improve, but this is not always the case. The current assessment policy provides general coverage of practices and procedures in the college but there are firm plans to review and update the information and guidance provided. The college has highlighted assessment as a priority for improvement, linked with teaching and learning, and will revise its policies to incorporate statutory and other changes. More directed policy will be necessary to guide assessment practice and to ensure that a thorough and consistent approach is adopted by all departments in the college.
33. The college has a well-understood system of rewards to support students' behaviour. The reward system involves the collection of form points for creditable pieces of work and commendations for outstanding work. These are totalled each month and a trophy is awarded to the leading form. Commendations are announced in assembly. At the end of the year, a presentation takes place to the winning form and the top boy and girl in each year. Students value these rewards. Behaviour is effectively monitored through form tutor and heads of year. There is an escalating system of sanctions, which eventually leads to temporary exclusion for a small minority of students. When this occurs, an action plan is agreed between the college, the parents and the student in order to support the students' return after the period of exclusion. The college has effective procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. As a consequence, the above average attendance rate has risen since the last inspection.

34. The college has maintained and enhanced the good standards of care provided for students noted in the previous inspection report. Provision has been enhanced by the extension of the roles of form tutors and the heads of year, and by the systematic collection and analysis of assessment information. The need to make more effective use of this information in teaching and learning is identified in the college development plan and steps have already been taken to provide more information to parents.

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

35. Parents have a generally positive view of the college. The college has good links with most parents and teachers have a good knowledge of students and their families. This provides a considerable support to students' learning. The college is welcoming to parents and, in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents expressed satisfaction about the approachability of the college. Links with parents are maintained in a number of ways. Students' organisers provide opportunities for parents to comment on students' work and to communicate with the college when tutors monitor these organisers. However, some parents complain that these organisers are not monitored consistently by all tutors with a consequent lack of response when comments are made. Inspection of students' organisers indicates that there is some justification for this complaint. A number of parents express concern about a lack of general information from the college. Informative newsletters are sent out to parents once a month and parents are contacted by telephone or letter as the need arises and the college makes a commitment to acknowledging and replying to all parental queries within 24 hours if possible. Much information is given to parents at parents' evenings and these are attended by a high percentage of parents. The college undertakes regular surveys of the views of parents and the outcomes of these surveys are fed into the college planning. The most recent survey has revealed that parents would like more curriculum information and the college has responded positively to this finding. Curriculum guides are to be provided for each year group from next September, a curriculum section is now included in college newsletters and the college has firm plans to hold curriculum evenings for parents. The overall quality of the college reports to parents is good and the annual report from governors meets statutory requirements.
36. The overall impact of parental involvement in the life of the college is good. There is a flourishing parents and teachers association. About 100 parents attend quiz evenings and the association helps to organise discos for the students. Parents are invited to go on visits to the theatre and help to transport students to sports fixtures. Through its various activities the association is able to contribute about £3000 to the college each year. The college works particularly closely with parents of students with special educational needs. For example, a number of parents were very much involved in a recent literacy project which has helped their children to improve their reading levels substantially. Most parents are actively involved in the annual reviews of the students' statements of special educational needs.
37. The college has made satisfactory progress in its partnership with parents since the last inspection report. The good links with parents noted in the previous inspection report have been maintained and some of these links, such as the collaborative work on reading, are very good and have had marked effects on standards.

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

38. The overall leadership and management of the college are very good. The principal provides excellent leadership and a clear educational direction for the college. Since taking up post in August 1997 the principal has successfully introduced a number of changes to the college management structure with the overall purpose of improving the quality of education provided at the college. The changes are intended to ensure that raising standards and improving teaching and learning are the focus of all management activities. To this end the senior management team has been restructured and management roles and responsibilities have been redefined. Also clear job descriptions have been written to cover all middle management and teaching and non-teaching posts with the consequence that roles and responsibilities are much clearer and there is an increased emphasis on raising standards and continuous improvement. Good teamwork is a feature of the college and the senior management team works as a mutually supportive unit and provides the principal with very good support, as does the whole of the teaching and support staff.

39. The college's mission statement and accompanying list of aims provide a good insight into the purposes and values of the college and strongly influences policy, practices and procedures. The college has a positive ethos and provides a well-ordered learning environment in which there is a strong commitment to raising standards in all areas. The effectiveness of this is evident in standards of attainment, attitudes, behaviour and attendance, which are all above average, as well as in students' personal development and relationships which are very good. The effectiveness of the college's commitment to professional development was recognised by the award of 'Investor in People' status in March 1999. Development planning is coherent in that the mission statement is reflected in the principles and values that underpin all development objectives. The college development plans clearly identify relevant priorities and cover both medium and long-term goals. Plans are costed effectively and have clearly defined targets, tasks, success criteria, staff responsibilities and timescales. All departmental development plans are well linked to the college development plan. Both the college and departmental development plans serve as effective working documents. Whole-college policies cover most relevant areas.
40. The college makes effective use of a range of sources of information in order to monitor and evaluate its work. Central to the processes of monitoring and evaluation is the collation and use of assessment information. In this, the college has made good progress over the past two years. The vice-principal with responsibility for assessment has established a comprehensive assessment database and carries out detailed analyses of students' attainment information. This information is presented to heads of departments in a clear and unambiguous way and they are required to consider the implications for teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility. Heads of department are then required to report the outcomes of these deliberations to the senior management team through their link managers. However, there are inconsistencies in the extent to which departments take appropriate action following their deliberations. The college is aware that the more consistent use of assessment information in the planning of teaching and learning is the next stage of development. Good use is also made of assessment information to measure the progress made by students by comparing the attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 2 with attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Classroom observations are carried out by members of the senior management team, according to an agreed schedule, and feedback from these observations is given to teachers and departments on the strengths and weaknesses identified in teaching and students' learning. The senior management team also engage in the systematic monitoring of students' work and again the outcomes of these reviews are fed back to teachers and heads of department. Through this monitoring the senior management team has developed a good awareness of the college's strengths and weaknesses. For example, strengths in teaching in music and modern foreign languages have been identified, as have the weaknesses in teaching in information technology and the inconsistencies in marking. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluation is now being extended to include heads of department and in order to facilitate this the senior management team makes time available for heads of department to observe lessons.
41. The overall quality of management provided by heads of department is good with examples of very good management in music and modern foreign languages. One of the features of management at all levels throughout the college is a strong commitment to improvement. This is very much an outcome of the emphasis put on college improvement by the senior management team over the past two years. A strong sense of teamwork is evident in most departments and this has led in subjects such as modern foreign languages to the sharing of good practice not only within the languages team, but also with languages teachers from the upper school. Similarly in design and technology there is a sharing of good practice across the material areas. The co-ordination of information technology across the college is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of guidance from the subject co-ordinator regarding the planning of information technology within other subjects. There is no information technology policy and an audit to determine coverage through other subjects has not been carried out. An audit of the information technology skills of staff has been carried out and the college recognises the need to arrange a comprehensive training programme for teachers across the college.
42. The management and co-ordination of special educational needs are very good. The special needs co-ordinator offers enlightened leadership and has created a strong sense of teamwork within a cohesive group of support teachers and assistants. The development plan is comprehensive and clear job descriptions lead to a purposeful use of time. There is a clear understanding of the requirements of the Code of Practice and support teachers and assistants are deployed to the best effect in lessons. All staff receive detailed information about students on the special educational needs register, so that they can meet their needs successfully. The

strength of the system lies in the people involved. All the support staff link effectively with nominated departments and are consulted by subject teachers about the most appropriate teaching strategies and resources needed in lessons to cater for students' needs. The access to the curriculum department holds an imaginative range of resources and every subject is allocated funds to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. These funds are used appropriately to meet identified priorities. The head of department provides regular reports to the governing body who are kept well informed on special educational needs matters.

43. The governing body is effective and supportive. It meets most of its statutory responsibilities through a well-considered committee structure. Governors are actively involved in overseeing the work of the college and provide the college with a substantial amount of specialist help and advice. Positive relationships exist between the governing body and the senior management team. Governors receive regular reports from the principal and other senior members of staff and are aware of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The quality of financial planning is very good. Governors are actively involved with the principal and senior management team in financial planning and monitoring and are given good support by the college manager. The college has effective procedures to ensure that the principles of best value for money are applied in the use of its resources. Action has been taken to attend to the few minor issues raised in the most recent auditor's report.
44. The college is an established provider for initial teacher training and provides good support for student teachers. The college also provides good support for newly qualified teachers. Arrangements for appraisal and professional development are good. Staff are appropriately qualified either by subject specialism or wide experience in the main teaching areas, although there is some non-specialist teaching in English. Support staff make effective contributions in lessons and there is suitable technician support in science. However, there is a lack of technician support in art, design and technology, and in information technology. Effective support is provided in the college library, and the skilled and experienced secretarial staff provide a welcoming school office and contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the college. The college manager provides very effective support in financial administration.
45. The accommodation enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. The college benefits from its status as a community college with the provision of some very good dual-use accommodation. For example, an excellent new computer room has recently been opened and the indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education are very good. The accommodation is also well adapted to suit the needs of students and adults with physical impairments. However, the accommodation for science is insufficient and nine lessons in the week have to be taught in rooms other than science laboratories. There are also some instances where rooms are too small for the numbers of students they accommodate and this restricts the range of teaching strategies that teachers can use. The college premises are maintained in a high state of cleanliness by the site supervisor and his team and this makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the college. The college has a carefully managed and monitored system for the acquisition and distribution of resources, which are generally adequate to support the curriculum. Resources are allocated to departments through a formula which staff regard as an equitable arrangement. Given the below average unit costs, the above average standards and progress made since the last inspection, it is judged that the college gives good value for money.

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

46. In order to raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of Welland Park College, with the help of the local authority should:
  - Raise standards in information technology by:
    - improving the quality of teaching, particularly in Year 9;
    - improving the co-ordination of information of technology and ensuring that it is planned for and taught effectively in all subjects;
    - ensuring that all staff have a programme of training to meet the needs identified in the recent audit of staff information technology skills.

*(Paragraphs: 2,5,15,41,88-94)*

- Ensure the consistent implementation of college policies so that:
    - all teachers mark students' work regularly and consistently, and that the marking provides students with clear guidance on how to improve the standard of their work;
    - effective use is made of assessment information to improve teaching and learning;
    - homework is set regularly in accordance with the college homework timetable and used to consolidate and extend students' learning;
    - the individual education plans of students with special educational needs specify measurable learning objectives in all subjects.

*(Paragraphs: 15,16-17,21,23,30-32,35,40,57,61,63,75,80,102,112,115)*
  - Improve the balance of the curriculum by ensuring that adequate time is allocated to creative subjects such as drama and dance.
- (Paragraphs: 18-19,23)*
- In addition, paragraphs: 5,12-14, 19, 22-23, 27, 44-45, 51,57, 62-64, 69, 72, 76, 107, 111, 116, include weaknesses which have not formed the basis of key issues identified above: the school should consider including these in the governors' post-inspection plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	109
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	10	49	34	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	577	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	39	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	97	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	104	81	185

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	69	65
	Girls	63	51	56
	Total	127	120	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69	65	66
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30	43	25
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	75	84
	Girls	66	59	65
	Total	131	134	149
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71	72	81
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29	48	39
	National	31	37	28

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	2
White	566
Any other minority ethnic group	4

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	21	0
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 – Y9**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	32.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Education support staff: Y7– Y9**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	198

### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y9**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81
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### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y9**

Key Stage 3	21.4
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## **Financial information**

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	1106690
Total expenditure	1118519
Expenditure per pupil	1936
Balance brought forward from previous year	31778
Balance carried forward to next year	19949

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	577
Number of questionnaires returned	155

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	58	8	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	27	60	6	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	59	8	0	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	59	18	5	1
The teaching is good.	16	70	6	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	12	51	27	5	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	51	10	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	58	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	14	52	27	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	18	61	8	1	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	61	9	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	55	18	2	8

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Fifteen parents attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting and twenty-one parents offered additional comments in response to the questionnaire. Most of the views expressed at the meeting and through the questionnaire were very supportive of the college and appreciative of the ways in which the college tries hard to stretch students and the high expectations of students' behaviour. Concern was expressed about standards in information technology, insufficient guidance given to students through the marking of their work and inconsistencies in the setting of homework.

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

### **ENGLISH**

47. Students' attainment in English at the age of 14 is above average. These standards of attainment are reflected in lessons and in students' work. In the 1999 National Curriculum Key Stage 3 tests both boys and girls achieved standards above the national averages, although these results were below those achieved by students in similar schools. The average points score fell in 1999 from the levels attained in 1998, in line with the national trend. Examination of results over the past four years shows that there is a tendency for girls to achieve higher standards than boys.
48. Students enter the college with above average levels of attainment and make sound progress through Key Stage 3 in all aspects of English. All students, including those who have special educational needs, are fluent and confident speakers. They speak clearly and audibly in both informal and formal situations and are willing and able to use talk and discussion to explore ideas and to extend their understanding. Almost all students are fluent readers, read widely for pleasure and can recognise an author's intentions. For example in two Year 8 lessons, students were able to identify key points and distinguish between fact and opinion in a variety of demanding articles about foxhunting. The writing skills of students of all levels of attainment also show good improvement as students progress through Key Stage 3. By Year 9 high attaining students are able to adapt their writing to suit the purpose and audience. Some work of a very high standard is produced, including essays, which compare the language and style of two authors, and stories that hold the reader's interest through a variety of structural and linguistic features. Average and lower attainers achieve satisfactory and sometimes good standards in relation to their prior levels of attainment.
49. These good standards of literacy are being further developed through strategies used in other subject areas. Pilot projects last year included the use of key words in all subjects and an analysis of the reading levels of texts used in the classroom to ensure that texts matched students' capabilities. The humanities department also piloted the use of writing frames to extend the range and quality of students' written work. The development of literacy raising strategies is ably led by the senior managers who display a very good understanding of the implications of national literacy initiatives for the curriculum and for teaching and learning styles.
50. Students display positive attitudes towards their English lessons. They arrive in lessons prepared to work hard and to learn. They do not waste time; they concentrate and listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Students enjoy their English lessons, are prepared to use their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. This is particularly evident in the independent extended projects that students have compiled for homework. Many of these are of very high quality showing that students have spent a great deal of time and effort on them, often using information technology to improve presentation.
51. The quality of teaching and learning is good and a significant number of very good lessons were observed. Teaching has many strengths. Lessons are well planned; teachers prepare thoroughly and this leads to brisk starts to lessons. Students are given clear guidance about what they are doing and as a consequence become fully involved in their learning. Teachers raise expectations both explicitly and implicitly through demanding vocabulary and well-matched tasks and resources, good pace and the use of models to show students how to improve. This results in students making good intellectual effort in their learning and recognising the progress they are making. For example, in a Year 7 lesson students were able to analyse a writer's style and use what they discovered to improve their own creative writing. A further strength is the variety of methods that teachers use in the classroom. Most lessons combine well-focused class sessions with paired and group work so that students are enabled both to plan new work and to consolidate what they have learned through discussion. Teachers' good management of behaviour leads to a working environment where all students, including those with special educational needs and lower attainers, feel secure enough to make suggestions, hypothesise and take risks knowing that their contributions will be accepted and valued. There are weaknesses in teaching in some of the discrete basic skills lessons, which are taught mainly by non-specialist teachers in Year 7 and Year 8. Not all of these teachers have the necessary subject expertise to give students advice about the suitability of reading

books and to extend students' understanding of spelling rules and the connections between words.

52. Other strengths, which have an effect on students' achievement, are the provision for students with special educational needs, including the use of support teachers and assistants, and the emphasis put on the spiritual and moral dimensions of the English curriculum. This was observed in a lesson when a Year 8 class were studying Adrian Mitchell's poem, "Back to the Playground Blues". Students were enabled both to reflect on how bullying can affect a child and also to learn about how the poet uses the rhythms of blues music to achieve certain effects.
53. There are some weaknesses in the curriculum for English. Information technology has not been integrated into the work of the department and so students have not been given regular opportunities to compose and edit their work onscreen. Although teachers use drama techniques during their English lessons, there is no continuous drama course, which teaches skills in a progressive manner. This and the absence of a drama space with specialist lighting and sound facilities means that it is difficult to create the intimate atmosphere in which the best drama can flourish.
54. Since the previous inspection the development of a range of resources has improved the match of work to students' different levels of attainment. Teachers ensure that attainment and progress are central to all their work in the classroom; objectives for learning are often shared with students and revisited at the end of the lesson to demonstrate the progress that has been made. These developments, together with the increasing use now being made of assessment data in planning, indicate that the department has made good progress since the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

55. The students' results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 were above national averages. Examination of results over the past four years shows that there are no significant differences in the standards attained by boys and girls. The attainment of students in the current Year 9 is consistent with these results. The comparison between the average points scored by students at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 shows that progress is generally in line with expectations. Increases in attainment over time are in line with the rise in the ability of students who enter the college and rising at a rate that is consistent with the national increase. Standards of numeracy are above average.
56. Students of all abilities show positive attitudes to learning. They arrived at lessons promptly, settle quickly and are ready to work promptly. During lessons they obtain and use resources in an efficient and orderly manner and this enables lessons to proceed at a good pace. These positive attitudes enable at least satisfactory progress to be made in lessons. Students ask good questions to confirm their understanding of the topics being covered and in some instances, higher attaining students ask good questions to extend their knowledge. Year 7 is taught in mixed ability classes and lesson activities in these classes are well matched to suit the individual student's needs. Higher attaining students in Year 7 are able to form equations, collect like terms and substitute and solve simple linear equations. In Year 8, this is developed into more complex expressions involving factorisation and expansion. Included in this is work on straight-line graphs. In Year 9 the work is extended to include simultaneous equations and inequalities. This standard of this work is well above national expectations. Average attaining students in Year 8 are able to solve equations and this is developed into the finding of rules of sequences in Year 9. Lower attaining students work with simple plane shapes and are able to calculate their perimeter and area. In Year 9 this is extended to include symmetry and more involved polygons. Scrutiny of students' work shows that there is coverage of all attainment targets. By providing work that is carefully matched to students' needs in Year 7 and by setting by ability in Year 8 and Year 9 together with the effective use of support teachers, students with special educational needs are able to make good progress.
57. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory and good in about two-thirds of lessons. All teachers have a good subject knowledge; this is evident in their clear lesson planning which relates the topics being covered to the experience of the students. However, the higher attaining students are insufficiently challenged in many lessons and are often given more work of the same nature rather than additional work that would stimulate and extend them. The most effective lessons make a good start with students quickly settled and

given a brief review of previous work. Lessons then proceed at a brisk pace with good teacher explanations, high student involvement and then suitable lesson activities. However, teaching tends to be of one predominant style with a heavy reliance on inputs from the teacher with little variety in teaching aids. Where lessons involved paired and small group work then students were clearly stimulated and engaged in constructive discussions with their partners. In some less effective lessons students were kept on the same task for too long and with a consequent decline in interest and enthusiasm. There are inconsistencies in the marking of students' work and not all teachers follow the department's marking policy. Although day-to-day marking is generally encouraging it often lacks the detailed and constructive comments needed to help students to improve their work. However, the marking of students' investigations is very thorough and provides students with clear guidance on how improvements can be made in future work.

58. The department is well managed and all members of the department contribute to planning and decision making. Resources are sufficient and effective use is made of displays of students' work to help to motivate students and foster a positive learning environment. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. There has been a rise in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results and the students' skills in investigation techniques have improved. This hard working department has the capacity to improve further in future years.

## SCIENCE

59. Levels of attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 were above average, although just below average when compared with similar schools. Whilst the performance of boys has declined over recent years, that of girls has improved to the point where there is no significant difference between achievement of boys and girls. There has been a decline in attainment levels since 1997, which reflects the national trend. A comparison of the attainment levels of those students who entered the college in 1996 with those achieved in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 shows students' progress in learning to be satisfactory. Standards overall have improved since the last inspection.
60. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment are above national expectations. The majority of students have a high level of knowledge and understanding of basic skills and concepts in the life, material and physical sciences. Students in Year 7, working on acidity and alkalinity, were able to interpret their experimental findings accurately and determine the degrees of acidity and alkalinity of a variety of substances and relate these to their use. Gains in understanding through the key stage are demonstrated when a related topic is studied in Year 9 and students were able to draw on earlier work on particle theory effectively to explain neutralisation of an acid. Year 9 students also show a high level of attainment in representing chemical reactions with formulae and equations and are able to deduce outcomes. Initiative, shown by a group of Year 8 students, enabled them quickly to understand and interpret the phenomenon of refracted light. Another Year 8 class showed above average skill in studying and describing a range of rock samples and, with the help of a classification key, used these properties to identify the rocks. Students with special educational needs are making good progress and attain good standards relative to their previous levels of attainment. For example, with appropriate support, two students in a Year 9 class were the first in the class to draw up a reactivity series from first principles. It is evident from students' work, particularly that of higher attaining students, that they are required to write their own notes rather than simply copying from given sources. Examples of high attainment were seen in each year but particularly in Year 9, for example in work on elements and compounds and the periodic table. There is a very high standard of display work about the department including a project in Year 8 on the 'science of bridges' and Year 9 work on the digestion of a ham sandwich. Investigatory work has improved since the last inspection but has not yet reached national expectations. Necessary skills are built up through Year 7 and by the end of the key stage planning, measuring and observation are in line with national expectations. Recording of results, especially the use of graphs, is weaker. Analysing, concluding and evaluation have all improved since the last inspection but remain a little below expectation. In an example of very high attainment, scientific knowledge was well used, in an investigation into friction, to make predictions, explain findings and evaluate the validity of the results.
61. The gains in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding are generally good. This is apparent in the increasing depth and extent of coverage in the written work as students move through the key stage. In lessons, learning is good where teachers use basic principles and

knowledge of earlier work to encourage students to work things out, rather than just providing information. Progress is also good in lessons where students are given clear understandings of the direction and purpose of a lesson. It is unsatisfactory when appropriate tasks or assessment in the lesson or associated homework do not consolidate the ground covered. Students' levels of effort and productivity are seen to rise when the teaching transmits an enthusiasm and interest and they are involved in challenging work rather than lengthy routines. Awareness of time control is shown to improve the pace at which a class works and its commitment.

62. Attitudes to learning are mostly good or very good. Teachers usually establish a good rapport with their classes. Students are largely co-operative, willing to follow instructions and keep to the tasks set in lessons. Most students acquire or consolidate practical skills and knowledge within the context of a lesson or topic but when asked to recall and explain earlier work it is apparent that there are some uncertainties and misconceptions. Concentration levels are mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. Students' concentration tends to wander when they are not fully engaged in the lesson. This is most likely to occur when the pace of the lesson is too slow or students engage in social chatter unconnected with the matter in hand. At these times, the noise level disturbs concentration. Interest is generally good. This is apparent in most lessons, particularly in Year 7, and in the high quality written work, projects and displays. Behaviour is generally good, but there are instances where some pupils display unsatisfactory attitudes and are unco-operative with the teacher. However, relationships both between staff and students and amongst students themselves are very good in most lessons. They work collaboratively and help each other in class. Many show initiative and a degree of independence in the research they do for their projects and displays, including the use of information technology, and, among higher attainers, in the detailed notes accompanying their classwork. However, there was a general lack of confidence amongst students in talking about their work.
63. The quality of teaching is good, with just one instance of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good and used effectively in teaching basic skills. The teaching methods employed provide a good range of opportunities for students to advance their learning and make progress. Exposition and explanation are usually clear but more effective when delivered with an enthusiasm and obvious interest. The use of questions at the beginning of the lesson, to review students' recall and understanding, is generally successful and helps the class to focus quickly. Too often insufficient time is left at the end of lessons to give a summary of key points. Practical work is well organised and resourced and very largely appropriate to the concepts to be learnt. The broad planning of the curriculum is good but the schemes of work and the lesson plans drawn from them lack detail with respect to timing and the setting of the main learning objectives. These, in turn, are not clearly linked to methods of assessing whether or not they have been achieved. Homework is set regularly, but its purpose with regard to the consolidation, extension and assessment of students' learning is not always clear. As indicated in the previous report, higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged. This is largely due to the under-use of the well-prepared learning resources available in the department. Assessment of attainment is too heavily dependent on the intermittent end of topic tests and there is too little use of continuous assessment. The correlation between the teachers' assessments and the results in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 was weak. There was a considerable overestimation of the students' attainment levels by some teachers. However the department is taking steps to ensure greater reliability in teacher assessments.
64. Since the inspection in 1995 the department has continued to be well managed. There is an obvious commitment in the department to the raising of levels of achievement and standards have risen since the 1995 report. The quality of teaching continues to be good. A sufficient supply of books, equipment and materials has been maintained but the resources for information technology available in the department remain inadequate. The provision of accommodation can no longer be described as sufficient. There are just three laboratories. Careful planning enables the curriculum to be delivered satisfactorily, but the frequent need to teach outside a laboratory is unsatisfactory.

## **ART**

65. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in art are above national expectations. In 1999, the majority of students were reported to be at or above national expectations. In lessons and in the work seen, standards overall are above expectations. Students use their sketchbooks

effectively to collect and record visual information and to keep completed self-assessment sheets. All students are competent when they use two and three-dimensional materials such as paint, pastel or paper mache to express and communicate ideas. In Year 9, there are limited opportunities for students to explore and develop visual ideas in different ways and for different purposes.

66. All students acquire the study skills needed to study art from different times and places such as paintings from Italy and craftwork made by North American Indians. They use a good range of technical terms and phrases when they discuss their own and other artists' work. Average and higher attaining students are developing the skill to express informed opinions and judgements about art. These students are confident when they talk about the purpose of their work and how they might improve it. Their numeracy skills are in line with expectations when they record from direct observation and measure and judge the size and proportion of objects. Information and communication technology skills are not yet being linked with students' practical art activities. Students with special educational needs attain satisfactory standards and make good progress.
67. Overall, teaching in art is good. Lesson planning is effective. The purposes of art activities are made clear to students and the level of challenge is sufficient to enable them to make good progress. Teachers provide skilful practical demonstrations which provide students with the methods and techniques they need to be successful. For example, the collage and water colour techniques shown to a Year 7 class enable them to produce more accomplished work. Teachers encourage students to use the appropriate technical terms when they discuss different visual and tactile qualities and effects when planning and evaluating their work. Students participate willingly in whole class discussion and they are keen to complete the tasks they are set. Other effective methods include the well-judged support and praise teachers give to students. Students value the help they receive from teachers and show clear enjoyment in their art lessons. As a consequence, their attitudes and behaviour are good. Average and higher attaining students show a good level of initiative in solving the problems they are set. In most lessons time is used effectively to manage a good balance between whole class teaching and support for individual students.
68. Teaching is also very effective when the work artists and other students is used to motivate and inspire students. For example, Year 8 students produced striking abstract pastel drawings after they had looked at the work of the artist Franc Marc. Examples of students' work are used most effectively when they are used to help students understand how particular qualities relate National Curriculum levels. The use of examples in this way helps students to know more about the standards that they are striving to achieve. Overall, procedures for assessing art are satisfactory and teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students well.
69. Art teachers are dedicated to promoting the status of the subject and work well as team members of the design and technology department. Good curriculum links are being developed particularly between art and textiles. Medium-term planning in art is good but further clarity is needed about how continuity and progression will be achieved. This is especially important because art is programmed as a part of design and technology and the time allocated for the subject in Year 9 is below average. The use of assessment to set targets for students and to raise standards in the subject is at an early stage. The arrangements for formally evaluating the impact and effectiveness of this National Curriculum subject are also at an early stage. The amount of technician support is insufficient for the number of teachers, rooms and the range of art activities. This includes the need to resource projects linking art and design and technology.
70. Standards in art have improved since the last inspection. Students are provided with a better level of challenge because teaching has improved and there is good medium-term planning. The limited time for art in Year 9, together with timetabling arrangements is still limiting students' progress. Reports to parents are much improved and now provide clear, informative statements about achievement and how students could improve. Co-ordination between art and design and technology has also improved and linked projects are used effectively to enable students to use and apply their creative skills. Technician support is still inadequate and there has been no improvement in this respect. However, overall, good progress has been made in art since the last inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

71. The standards achieved by students in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 3 over the last three years, have been consistently above national averages. In 1998, students' performance was well above the national average and in 1999 above, with little difference between boys' and girls' attainment.
72. The best practical work of both boys and girls is of excellent quality in all material areas which includes food, textiles and resistant materials (wood, plastics and metal). Some of the craftwork in particular, is of a very high standard. This includes accuracy, fit and finish and in meeting the aesthetic requirements. Students' practical skills are better than their designing skills. Students demonstrate capability in researching, developing ideas, manufacturing and evaluating their work. Overall, their recognition and understanding of the designing and making procedure is very good particularly in the upper years. Very effective project management is evident in all stages of development. However, the design idea and working drawing stages particularly in Year 9, require more attention in order to show technical and functional detail more clearly. Although some use of information technology, such as in the Year 9 design and make assignment on 'cook-chill products', insufficient use is made of information technology in the department. A wide range of individual, creative designs are evident for example, in the making of 'novelty clocks' in resistant materials and the 'cool carriers' in textiles. However, higher attaining students in Year 9 are not being provided with sufficient open-ended projects which offer a more appropriate level of challenge to these students. Some good use of disassembly work is carried out, for example, when analysing a raspberry gateau to determine such matters as; nutritional value, shelf life, taste and cost. However, in resistant materials, students have insufficient opportunities to undertake disassembly work. The teachers recognise this weakness and have established a testing process to improve students' knowledge and understanding of materials, components and processes.
73. The quality of students' learning, at all levels of attainment, is good and students make good progress in each of the material areas. Students with special needs make good progress particularly when required to make products. Students demonstrate self-confidence, and skill in their ability to select materials, tools and equipment and in working correctly and safely in order to design and make products. Their intellectual effort is often good, as in Year 7 when producing a mechanical toy, some students were able to explain the design and operation of the product, including how friction was being used to make things move. They are prepared to persevere in the organising, planning and making of their products and their productivity and pace of working is a real strength. Students are consistently using and extending their skills to design and make products.
74. Students in all years have very positive attitudes towards the subject. They demonstrate enjoyment and tenacity when making artefacts and take obvious pride in their work. Their sense of commitment is a pleasure to observe both when they work independently and as a team. They are well behaved and operate in a correct and safe manner. Students form friendly relationships, are ready to help one another and show respect for their teachers.
75. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned and organised within each material area of design and technology and resource provision and management is often a very positive feature. Teachers are well qualified and exhibit a real willingness to move forward. Expectations are high and practical skills in particular, are carefully taught. Teachers regularly take account of hygiene and health and safety matters and instil in students the need to work safely at all times. Emphasis is laid on the need to produce quality products. Teachers assess and record attainment, identify National Curriculum levels and involve students in the assessment process. However, there is a need for the more regular use of ongoing assessment, as students work on their project assignments, in order to confirm the quality of learning.
76. This is a good, strong department where teachers work well together. The conscientious team have adopted a systematic approach particularly in the sharing practice across the material areas. They work hard to produce support material to aid student learning. Statutory requirements are met and curriculum planning is good. The accommodation is well organised and there are excellent displays of students' work. However, specialist technician support is insufficient. Time for design and technology particularly in Year 9, is below the national average and some groups in Year 9 do not receive the same amount of teaching time. Nevertheless, the department has made good progress since the last inspection. The co-ordination between the art and design and technology areas is much improved and attainment is above national expectations.



## GEOGRAPHY

77. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Inspection evidence confirms teacher assessments which show standards to be above expectations, with some particularly good work produced by higher attaining students. There are no clear differences in the standards of attainment of boys and girls.
78. Students have a good grasp of concepts and skills. They use atlases well, for example, to look for the relationship between earthquakes and volcanoes. They show good understanding about caring for the environment and relate what they have learnt well to particular issues. For example students appreciate the conflicts generated in the exploitation of the Amazon rainforest. Higher attaining students are able to explain the different viewpoints in some detail and justify them well. Average attainers give competent explanations. Their knowledge of different countries although sound, often lacks detail. Good emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy skills that support students' work well. Students with special needs attain satisfactory standards and make good progress. This is the result of close co-operation between teachers and support staff and the work being well adapted to their individual needs. Overall standards are sufficiently high in this subject, but there is a lack of opportunity for students to develop their understanding of geographical concepts through fieldwork and the use of information technology.
79. Students have positive attitudes to the subject and respond well to their teachers. They are clear about what is expected of them and work hard and behave well accordingly. They take care of their books and present their work neatly. They concentrate well for sustained periods of time. As a result, there is a good working atmosphere in rooms which contain colourful and informative displays and include good examples of students' work. This makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the department. Students show their willingness to listen and respect different points of view, as in a lesson about immigration when they talked sensibly about racism.
80. The quality of teaching is good overall. Half the lessons seen were good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to question, challenge and develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills. They are well organised, clear about what they expect and most lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers use resources well to interest students and vary their experiences, such as making use of the white-board as a focus to collate and display information in interesting ways. Lesson activities are carefully chosen to consolidate and build on what students have learnt previously. Year 9 students, for example, were able to apply what they had learnt about rainfall to patterns in New Zealand to make simple predictions about natural hazards. Good schemes of work support daily planning and teachers with other specialisms. However, they sometimes lack the experience necessary to adapt these lesson plans to suit the needs of all levels of attainment and to extend students' thinking through class discussion. The quality of homework is variable as is the quality of marking. Homework is not always used to support and extend classroom learning and although marking is regular and gives students a clear idea of what they have achieved, it is not does not give them sufficient guidance on what they must do in order to improve the quality of their work.
81. Students make good progress over time because they have benefited from new work plans and more specialist teaching. At the beginning of Year 7, higher attaining students are insufficiently challenged because undue time is taken consolidating mapskills covered in Key Stage 2. However the quality and quantity of work soon improves and the range increases. Much work involves enquiry and decision making, enabling students to think more independently. Literacy strategies, such as writing frames, have not only helped lower attainers to organise their ideas but have also helped higher attainers to plan and develop their ideas. They use geographical vocabulary well. The extended writing of higher attaining Year 8 students on 'migration', for example, is of a particularly good standard. Some teachers make effective use of deadlines, which encourage students to concentrate hard on the topic as, for example, in a Year 8 'timed' investigative task on endangered species.
82. The humanities department benefits from good leadership and has made good progress since the last inspection. The new head of department has revised work schemes and these provide more opportunities for investigative work and for students to take more responsibility. Planning activities to incorporate fieldwork are a priority in the departmental plan. The focus on extending teaching styles has meant that the work is more suited to all levels of attainment.

Students are benefiting by being taught by more specialist teachers. As a result standards have risen. Resources, with the exception of information technology, are now sufficient to support the curriculum.

## **HISTORY**

83. Teachers' assessments for students at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicated that the majority were attaining above the national expectations for their age. The results of the teachers' assessments for the period 1997-1999 showed that the majority of students were consistently attaining above national expectations for their age.
84. In lessons and in work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are better than those expected for students of the same age nationally. There are no apparent differences between the performance of boys and girls. Students have a good knowledge of the topics they are studying and most have a better understanding than expected for their age. For example, Year 9 students of all attainment levels have a good understanding of the changes taking place in the world at the start of the twentieth century and their impact on different groups in society. Higher attaining students are able to use this knowledge to discuss the criteria required to judge the importance of these events. Students at all levels of attainment have good skills in selecting and using information for a specific purpose. Year 7 students successfully use textbooks and other stimulus materials to analyse the lasting effects of the Roman legacy on society today, whilst Year 8 students accurately research source materials in order to explain reasons for the defeat of the Spanish Armada.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In all lessons observed, effective teaching enhances students' understanding of the subject. The main strengths are good planning based on a confident knowledge of the subject, often drawing successfully on the teachers' knowledge of current affairs, and good classroom control and management. Students know what they are expected to learn because objectives are clearly communicated to them at the start of each lesson. Relationships with students are good and benefit from an appropriate use of humour together with effective praise and encouragement. Teachers provide appropriate learning activities for students of all levels of attainment and those with special educational needs therefore make progress, which matches that of other students in the group. The quality of teaching inspires, challenges and enthuses students allowing them to learn effectively. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the use of historical films and effective questioning by the teacher ensures that students of all attainment levels are successfully engaged in debate. Consequently the attitudes and behaviour of students of all levels of attainment are good. They arrive at lessons with a positive attitude, very quickly settle to work and listen to teachers' introductions and explanations attentively. They work together on a collaborative basis very successfully, demonstrating their willingness to listen to the views of others.
86. The leadership and management of the subject by the head of department for humanities are good. A clear and comprehensive departmental handbook contains detailed schemes of work which are closely followed by members of the department. Good use is made of teachers' subject specialisms and teachers are effectively deployed. Most lessons are taught in specialist humanities classrooms where attractive displays bring the subject to life. The department is now benefiting from improved access to information and communications technology. It has successfully developed assessment tasks in order to judge students' progress against learning objectives but it recognises that further development is required in this area, especially in the use of assessment in curriculum planning.
87. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The level of resources has improved, especially through the purchase of appropriate textbooks. The subject specialisms of teachers are now used more effectively. The department places greater emphasis on developing students' understanding of the subject together with encouraging the development of appropriate skills and providing opportunities to discuss and reflect on their learning.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

88. Teacher assessments show that standards of achievement in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 had declined from 1998, when they were in line with the national average, to be below the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards of

attainment of students currently in the college are generally in line with national expectations. However, these standards are not as high as they should be.

89. By the end of Key Stage 3, students can log on to the network, call up programs and save and retrieve files without support. A number of students demonstrate confidence and competence in text handling. In Year 7, for example, they are able to import pictures and relate these to text to create a desktop published poster for the sale of a house. In Year 8, students are able to word-process competently and produce a page from a holiday diary. In Year 9, students make effective use of CD ROM's when using a multi-media program and are also able to use a computer effectively to control the moving parts in a construction kit assembly. However, students are not being sufficiently extended, particularly those who have access to home computers. This is largely due to all students being presented with the same diet of lesson activities and unsatisfactory organisation in some lessons. Many students report that they are given repetitive tasks in lessons and that the tasks are too easy. Students are often unclear about lesson aims, particularly when too many activities are included in a one-hour lesson period. While there are some good examples of computer generated portfolios, such as in a rainforest investigation in geography, there is little evidence of information technology being used systematically in other subjects.
90. Although the overall quality of students' learning is satisfactory there is evidence of under-performance. While students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is satisfactory in some areas, for instance, in designing a page of information and importing graphics, the reasoning skills of many students are weak and they are unsure about evaluating their own work, and the ways in which it can be improved, particularly in Year 9. The physical and creative effort is satisfactory and students make good efforts to maintain interest and concentration, particularly in the early Year 7 and Year 8. Although the progress of students with special educational needs is affected in the same way as all other students, they receive satisfactory support and in particular from the learning support assistants. The overall productivity and pace of working are weak mostly because of the challenging behaviour of some students in Year 9, which affects their own and other students' work.
91. Teachers who are teaching the discrete information technology lessons demonstrate a good knowledge of the subject and make effective use of the available resources in many lessons. The most effective lessons are characterised by sensible planning good support for all students, particularly those with special educational needs. However, teaching has several shortcomings and as result there is much student under-achievement, particularly in Year 9. As consequence the overall quality of teaching in information technology is unsatisfactory. Expectations are low, class management is weak and the pace of lessons is too slow. Insufficient intellectual demands are made on students and in particular the higher attaining students. Students' work is not marked regularly and when it is, it often gives insufficient guidance on how the work can be improved.
92. Although many students demonstrate positive attitudes towards the subject and their own learning, the overall attitudes of students are unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 9. Relationships are satisfactory and students are willing to support each other when they experience difficulty using the computer. They generally behave responsibly and use the equipment carefully and safely. However, a small but significant number of students in Year 9 display unsatisfactory behaviour, which has an adverse effect not only on their own attainment and progress but also that of other students in the class.
93. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met and the schemes of work for the taught programme are good. The assessment package is well organised and is related to National Curriculum levels. The key information technology skills to be taught are clearly identified and students are involved in self-assessment. However, the teachers' verification of the students assessed work is not up-to-date. There is no evidence to show that assessment information is being used to guide curriculum planning and students are not identifying and completing their targets for improvement records. The co-ordination of information technology across the college is unsatisfactory and teachers are given little guidance on the planning of information technology within their subjects. There is no information technology policy and an audit to determine coverage through other subjects is not available. The senior management team is aware of this weakness and has identified information technology as a development priority. A staff development information technology audit has been carried out and the college recognises the need to arrange a comprehensive training programme for teachers across the college. The majority of departments have either too few or no computers and equipment to respond to the information technology orders. However, an excellent information technology

suite has recently been opened which is now available to departments through a booking system. There is no information technology technician and the subject co-ordinator has to devote time to performing some of the work that would normally be carried out by a technician.

94. Progress made since the last inspection includes a significant improvement in the facilities available for the teaching of information technology including an increase in the provision of computers. The assessment system has also been improved, although it is not being consistently implemented. However, expectations are still too low and standards of attainment are not as high as they should be. As a consequence, the overall position with regard to information technology is little changed since the time of the last inspection.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

95. Teachers' assessments for students at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicated that the majority were attaining standards that were close to national expectations for their age. The results of teachers' assessments for the period 1997-1999 show that over this period, the majority of students were consistently attaining standards that were close to expectations for their age. Inspection evidence now indicates that standards are above average. Teachers' assessments for students currently in the college are consistent with this judgement. Girls outnumber boys in some top sets but within sets there is no significant variation in attainment between boys and girls. Students with special educational needs attain satisfactory standards and make good progress.
96. In all classes, students display positive attitudes. They pay great attention to accuracy and this is particularly beneficial in writing and speaking activities. They support their own learning by volunteering ideas in class discussions and organising their work well, particularly when working in pairs. The vast majority have a real desire to learn and this promotes a supportive atmosphere in all lessons. As they move through the key stage they appreciate the levels of trust placed in them and show increasing confidence in the active use of language. They really enjoy getting things right, and faithfully copy their teachers' accent and intonation. All of these attributes lead to significant numbers of students using grammatically correct language in extended writing and speaking activities. They also listen with respect to their teachers' and to contributions from other students in the class. This is supplemented by a keen awareness of the need to identify key details in listening exercises and helps them to accomplish these successfully. Thoroughness is an important element in reading comprehension, and all students undertake regular extended reading from the class-based sets of readers. Standards are high in all skill areas.
97. The success of the department is underpinned by strong teamwork. All teachers have agreed how to get the best out of their students. As a result, a very distinctive teaching style has emerged. There is an overwhelming insistence on accuracy and the active involvement of students at all times in the lesson. This is achieved so successfully that teaching is very good in most lessons and at times excellent. This is a significant contributory factor to the standards being achieved.

98. Students make a very good start in Year 7. The lessons are well planned to take account of the wide range of ability, since setting does not take place until Year 8. In one lesson, the teacher had prepared three distinct worksheets to match precisely individual students' needs. All students benefit from exposure to an appropriate level of challenge. High expectations predominate and a high powered lesson in Year 8, for example, had a compelling and unrelenting pace. French is the sole medium of communication in these high quality lessons and students use a range of tenses with a good understanding of formation. The crisp and varied use of questioning, and the highly focused response of students contributes to an intensive learning atmosphere and one which draws on knowledge gained over a number of topics. This ability to use previously acquired knowledge is a major factor in the development of linguistic skills.
99. Although most lessons have these features, in a few classes the teaching is more leisurely. There is an over-reliance on the use of English for organisational matters and questioning is too repetitive. Occasionally, movement around the room is not sufficiently targeted when students are working independently or in pairs. However, the preparation and use of resources is always a strength. Teachers share ideas and this results in the widespread use of flashcards, cue cards and the overhead projector as resources to stimulate learning.
100. One of the major breakthroughs in recent months has been the higher profile of German. This has been supported enthusiastically by an advanced skills teacher from the partner upper school, who joins teachers from Welland Park in their lessons and teaches alongside them. Teaching has benefited from observing the techniques used by this teacher and standards of attainment in the language have improved. German is now a popular option choice when students move on to Key Stage 4.
101. The head of department provides strong leadership and has the full support of a committed team. The invaluable guidance offered by the vice-principal has helped to cement the very good practice that exists. The department has an excellent development plan and the monitoring of teaching and student attainment is comprehensive. There is a real sense of optimism in the department and this is conveyed in lessons when a sense of enjoyment and discovery is often present.
102. Progress since the last inspection is very good. The department has identified three areas for further improvement; the more consistent marking of students' work and the identification of linguistic targets, the development of portfolios and the use of new technology. One of the great strengths of this very successful department is that it has a good understanding of the areas in which improvement are needed.

## **MUSIC**

103. Attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3 is above nationally expected levels. Students compose in a variety of idioms using clear structures and by trial and error refine their work. Higher attaining students use melody, rhythm and texture imaginatively and one or two students who attend extra-curricular sessions for higher attaining musicians compose pieces which are well above national expectations for their ages. Students perform confidently on classroom instruments and keyboards, using proper keyboard fingering. Almost one half of the students in a Year 8 class performance could play the 'Can-Can' melody fluently, accurately and at an appropriate speed and several successfully added the fully fingered chordal accompaniment. However, many students cannot improve their technique because classroom chairs are at the wrong height. Ensemble skills are good; average and higher attaining students read complex staff notation, maintain independent lines, listen to other parts and can recover from minor mishaps. Students' listening skills are good and many use appropriate subject language both in whole class discussions and in independent group work. Although students sing enthusiastically, they do not listen sufficiently closely to the quality of sound they produce. Students with special educational needs make good progress in music. They develop memorising and co-ordination skills through composing and performing, and greatly increase their self-esteem.
104. Students co-operate well, are persistent in their work and are eager to succeed. When given the opportunity to work together in groups they are courteous, listen to each other's ideas and make good use of the available time. They control noise levels well, even in congested situations.

105. The quality of teaching is very good and is at times excellent. The teacher's charismatic, good-humoured style ensures very good control. She has high expectations of students' co-operation and potential attainment and by good use of day-to-day assessment carefully matches work to their individual abilities. Material written by the teacher for class performances of the 'Can-Can' and 'Trumpet Voluntary', as well as increasing students' performing skills in a systematic way by providing different levels of challenge, enriches their aural experience by using a variety of different instruments for melodic and harmonic parts. Students who have instrumental lessons are encouraged to bring their instruments to class, further improving their playing and enhancing the experience of others. In one excellent lesson, students were encouraged to use musical terms to express their understanding of musical structures, and to suggest their own ideas. At the same time, by appraising one another's performances, they were able to develop discrimination. A brisk pace is usually maintained but towards the end of some lessons devoted to one type of activity, pace declines. The quality of instrumental teaching of around seventy students is good. The department is well organised and documentation is detailed and of a very high standard.
106. Instrumental and choral work, involving over one hundred students, is of a very high quality, and students take immense care to perform with style and sensitivity. Concerts take place regularly and the college's ensembles feature in various local events throughout the year. Their efforts are widely appreciated by parents and by the local community.
107. Staffing for class music is barely adequate. The co-ordinator has too little time in which to organise the department's day-to-day affairs and its many extra-curricular activities. The main teaching room is equipped with fixed furniture which obstruct the teacher's view of students' activities. Practice rooms and storage spaces are inadequate and in a poor state of decoration and cleanliness. There is no provision for music technology, and no ethnic instruments to permit students to explore the music of other cultures.
108. Since the previous inspection high standards of attainment in have been maintained both in class and in extra-curricular activities. The quality of teaching remains very high. However, the physical provision for music is still barely satisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

109. By the end of Key Stage 3, most students achieve standards that are in line with expectations for their age. This was also the case at the time of the previous inspection. There is no significant difference between girls and boys attainments other than in badminton where boys use more advanced tactics and play their shots with greater consistency. Boys achieve levels of skill expected for their age in rugby and a few are outstanding performers. Girls' attainment in hockey is in line with expectations. Students plan and evaluate their own activities. They understand rules and conventions in team games and, in extra-curricular netball, girls officiate with accuracy and confidence. Students know how to warm up but do not take responsibility for this part of lessons.
110. Students' attitudes to learning are good and sometimes they are very good. Levels of participation are high. Students enjoy lessons. They are interested, enthusiastic and try hard. Girls and boys persevere with activities, even in difficult weather conditions. Their behaviour is consistently good. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. Students work productively together in pairs, groups and teams. Some students naturally and spontaneously assume responsibility on these occasions, but there are few planned opportunities to do so. Most students play fairly and continue to concentrate, even when not directly supervised by the teacher. Nearly all students take part in inter-form competition.
111. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and enables students to make satisfactory progress through the key stage. Occasionally, teaching is good or very good. It was unsatisfactory in only one lesson. Good features include the teachers' high expectations of students' efforts and performance, the assessment of students' progress in lessons and the quality of relationships between teachers and students which encourages commitment to learning. In most lessons, teachers' explanations and demonstrations of skills and game strategies give students a clear idea of the quality of work expected and praise is used effectively to encourage them to improve still further. As students develop and refine their skills, the challenge increases. In a good rugby lesson, students know what they need to do in order to improve their passing skills. The teacher increases the pace as he assesses their progress and then introduces an element of competition between groups of similar attainment.

They make good progress. Progress becomes very good when, in addition, students are sharply questioned about their previous learning and have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt at the end of the lesson. Students with more advanced skills are generally well catered for with more challenging tasks. In most lessons, students have the opportunity to plan and evaluate their performance, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for students to suggest and lead warm up activities as they progress through the key stage. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons, lower attaining students are given tasks, which are too demanding. Teachers provide good individual attention to students who have special educational needs and they make similar progress to other students. Students' progress was less than satisfactory on only one occasion, because the teacher lacked precise technical knowledge and understanding of the volleyball skills and tactics being taught.

112. Subject leadership is good and has developed a shared commitment to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching. Extra-curricular provision is a strength, with a particularly impressive programme of inter form competition which involves the majority of students. Development planning recognises relevant priorities, including the need to improve provision for dance and gymnastics. Good use is made of 'challenge funding' to support developments. The quality of the accommodation for physical education is good. The subject curriculum is broader than usually found, but, as a consequence, restricts the time for students to reach high standards in all activities. Assessment procedures are good but assessment information is not being analysed and used effectively. Good progress has been made in response to all the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

113. Inspection evidence indicates that, by the end of Key Stage 3, most students meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Students have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of some of the key features of Christianity and other major world religions, which they study. For example, they know about ceremonies concerning birth and marriage in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of the role and personality of Jesus, understand the symbolism in objects used in Christian worship, and can describe the different attributes of the major Hindu gods. However, their knowledge and understanding of the faiths studied lacks depth and an overall cohesion. Their capacity to make a personal response to religious issues is above average. Most students can appreciate the way that religion helps people to deal with difficult issues such as death and higher attainers write sensitively at length on the subject. They discuss relevant moral issues sensibly.
114. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Most students are keen to share their own knowledge and experiences in lessons, recognising that teachers value their contributions. They are interested in learning about beliefs, values and customs which are different from their own and treat them with due respect. Students are prepared to reflect on their own values, for example, in discussing personal freedom. Boys and girls readily collaborate with each other when working in groups and many students are ready to volunteer to read aloud or report back their findings for the class. Relationships with teachers are good. Many of the examples of their work which are on display in classrooms, for example, "memory boxes" and books of Hindu fables have been produced with meticulous care and evident pride in the quality of presentation. After learning of the importance of charity in Islam some students commendably took the initiative in organising charitable activity in college by means of a 'shoebox collection'.
115. The quality of teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Most of the non-specialist teachers who contribute to the subject have previous experience of teaching religious education and are supported by good planning documents. Teachers use a good variety of interesting learning experiences so that, in general, students are eager to learn. This is particularly so when they can see the relevance to their own lives. For example, after a period of reflection in a well-conducted stilling exercise, Year 7 students talk about their own experience of celebrations and are led, by skilful questioning, to appreciate the distinction between them and festivals. Students in Year 8 gain a good understanding of the concept of "church" because the visiting clergyman who takes the lesson makes an effective comparison with an aspect of popular culture. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and are intellectually demanding. In a well-focused lesson in Year 9, students maturely consider the nature and importance of personal responsibility by writing about and discussing, apparent constraints on their lives. Teaching strategies also make a good contribution to the

development of students' listening, speaking and writing skills by providing regular opportunities for discussion, reading aloud to the class and the use of a variety of means of communicating ideas and findings including extended writing. Resources, including religious objects and visitors to the college are used well. Students work is regularly marked. However, procedures vary between teachers and some marking does not help students to see how they can improve their work.

116. The rate of improvement in religious education since the appointment of a subject co-ordinator has been good. The hard working subject co-ordinator has substantial previous experience of teaching religious education and has done much to raise the profile of the subject in the college, not least by creating a culture for improvement which has led to a rise in standards of achievement. Good management at departmental level and the commitment of the experienced but non-specialist team who teach the subject also contributes to subject development and improvement. Except in the case of subject specialism, good progress has been made in response to all the issues, which were raised at the time of the previous inspection. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual development in particular, and all other aspects of their personal development. There is a lack of balance in the time allocated between the subject's attainment targets, which has an impact on students' progress in learning about the key features of religions. Assessment procedures are currently weak but feature in development planning.