

INSPECTION REPORT

KIRKBY COLLEGE

NOTTINGHAM

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122826

Headteacher: Lynn Parkes

Reporting inspector: Mr M Pavey
17650

Dates of inspection: 18-22 September 2000

Inspection number: 223775

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Tennyson Street Kirkby in Ashfield Nottingham |
| Postcode: | NG17 7DH |
| Telephone number: | 01623 455925 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr R Nixon |
| Date of previous inspection: | 19 February 1996 |

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|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|
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| | | | The school's results and achievements |
| | | | How well are pupils taught? |
| | | | How well is the school led and managed? |
| | | | What should the school do to improve further? |
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| | | | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| | | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
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| Trevor Slack 2079 | Team inspector | Design and technology | |
| Vernon Williams 20497 | Team inspector | Geography | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| William Wimshurst 8341 | Team inspector | Information technology | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kirkby College is an 11-18 community, coeducational comprehensive school of 768 students, including 65 in the sixth form. There are very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds. The attainment of students on entry is well below average, and the college has a high proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN), including some 20 students with emotional and behavioural learning difficulties. The area served by the school is more disadvantaged than most, and some students come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. A high proportion are eligible for free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The college provides an effective education and has more strengths than weaknesses. Good leadership and a shared intention to raise students' attainment lead to teaching and progress of good quality. The college provides good value for money and its sixth form is cost-effective.

What the school does well

- Teaching is of good quality in almost all subjects.
- Students make good progress over the GCSE courses and achieve higher results than might be expected in these examinations.
- The college helps students with SEN well.
- Students are mostly enthusiastic about the college and are keen to learn. Relationships are very good.
- The college provides a good curriculum, very good careers advice and links with industry, good personal guidance and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- The college looks after its students well. Students appreciate the care and help given by staff.
- The college is well led. Teachers share a will to improve its performance.
- Physical education, modern foreign languages, and design and technology are strong subjects.

What could be improved

- There are weaknesses in the teaching and learning of English.
- Low levels of literacy persist throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, and hold students back.
- Opportunities for information and communication technology (ICT) are limited, across the curriculum.
- There is no overall programme for the effective monitoring of teaching. Senior managers need a common way to monitor and evaluate all aspects of departmental performance.
- The college is not monitoring and supporting students' academic progress as well as it should. Tutors are not involved in this process.
- Music needs to be re-established on the appointment of a new teacher in charge of the subject.

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 in February 1996. Since then, improvement has been satisfactory overall. There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the outlook and attitudes of the students. Improvement in the provision for students with SEN has been very good. Improvements in most aspects of management and in subjects have been at least satisfactory. Attainment in GCSE has improved somewhat, and the college has maintained standards of attainment appropriate for these students. There has not been enough improvement in some of the key issues for action from the last inspection, particularly in English, ICT, the library and the monitoring of the work of the college. These remain key issues for action in this report.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| GCSE examinations | D | D | D | C |
| A-levels/AS-levels | D | E | E* | n/a |

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

* In this summary report, 'similar schools' refer to schools with similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals.

When students enter the college, their attainment is well below the national average, and this is seen also in the results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. However, students' achievements and progress are satisfactory during Key Stage 3, and during Key Stage 4 their achievement and progress are good. This leads to GCSE results which are below, but not well below, the national average. Comparing GCSE results in 1999 with the test results of these students in 1997, they made well above average progress compared with students in other schools. Over recent years, results in Key Stage 3 tests have remained well below average, but GCSE results have risen a little. The college sets realistic targets for attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and succeeds in reaching them.

A level results were very low in 1999, being in the lowest 5 per cent nationally. Results recovered to previous levels in 2000. In view of the often modest GCSE grades with which students begin their A level and GNVQ courses, their achievement and progress over the course are satisfactory. Despite low A level results overall, most students go on to further study or employment. In an average year, around half of A level leavers go into higher education and a fifth into further education, with a number also who find employment with training. Students taking the one year GNVQ course leave with results below the national average, but many go on to useful courses in further education or employment, many with training.

Standards in key skills are below average, well below in literacy at Key Stage 3. Standards in literacy and ICT do not improve enough over students' time in the college. Standards of numeracy are adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum studied.

Standards in English are very low at Key Stage 3, reflecting low levels of literacy. They remain below average at Key Stage 4. In mathematics and science, standards are also very low at Key Stage 3 and below average at Key Stage 4. In all these subjects, students improve their standards, making at least satisfactory progress over the two key stages. Standards in physical education, modern foreign languages and design and technology are stronger than in other subjects. Standards are low in music, where the college lacks a permanent teacher at present. Generally, boys attain less highly than girls, though boys narrow the gap over Key Stage 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Students are keen to work and learn. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Generally good. Students behave well in most lessons and around the college. Parents comment that behaviour has improved. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Students develop responsible attitudes. Relationships among students and between students and staff are very good. |
| Attendance | Unsatisfactory. Attendance remains below average, despite an improvement in recent years. Punctuality is satisfactory. |

Good attitudes, behaviour and relationships reflect the care taken by the college to ensure a positive foundation for learning. These good qualities help to create the good progress students make through Key Stage 4.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 156 lessons seen | Good | Good | Good |

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

Teaching is of good quality overall. Of the lessons seen, 3 per cent were excellent, 19 per cent very good, 40 per cent good, 30 per cent satisfactory, 6 per cent unsatisfactory and 2 per cent poor. There were no very poor lessons. Teaching is good in almost all subjects. In English, teaching is satisfactory overall but with some weaknesses, particularly in the sixth form; teaching is unsatisfactory in music, where there was no permanent teacher at the time of the inspection; and also in the key skills of literacy and ICT across the curriculum, where teachers have not prepared schemes of work in enough detail. Teaching is good overall in mathematics, but satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In science, teaching is good at all stages. The college meets the needs of all students well. The student support centre provides a good education for students with SEN, who make good progress.

Teachers' particular strength is their management of students, which leads to a secure and supportive atmosphere in which to learn. There is no particular weakness in the overall quality of teaching, though the assessment of students' work is less strong than other aspects.

As the result of good teaching, students learn well. There are weaknesses in their learning in English and music, reflecting the quality of teaching in some aspects of English and generally in music. Their learning of key skills in literacy and ICT also has weaknesses. Otherwise, they learn well, with particularly effective learning by students with SEN.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good overall. The curriculum is particularly well supported by programmes of personal and social education (PSE), careers, links with industry and extra-curricular activities. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. There is a good range of courses for these students, who make good progress as a result. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, while that for moral and social development is good. |

| | |
|--|---|
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Well. Teachers are concerned for students' welfare and have good programmes for improving behaviour and attendance. However, procedures for monitoring students' work are unsatisfactory. |
|--|---|

The college works well in partnership with parents, who appreciate the interest and concern shown.

The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in the provision for ICT across the curriculum, which is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient time to teach the agreed syllabus in RE in Years 8 and 9, and RE is not clearly identified in the sixth form general studies syllabus.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher and senior staff lead the college well, and have created good potential for further progress. The college development plan has identified the right priorities for the future. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Satisfactory. Governors know the college well and are closely in touch with staff and parents. They need to monitor and evaluate the college's development more closely. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Unsatisfactory. The senior team undertake some monitoring, but this is not undertaken to a uniform pattern, or equally well shared with heads of faculties and other staff. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. The college's finances are well managed and very good use is made of the range of grants available. |

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate. A particular strength of management is its careful creation of good systems of support for students who need the self-confidence to aim for success - good careers, personal guidance, provision for SEN and extra-curricular activities. The weakness lies in the lack of convincing systems for ensuring the quality of performance by teachers and students. This is now strong enough to make the introduction of such systems a positive experience for teachers and students. The college applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college's expectation of hard work and achievement • How the college helps students become mature and responsible • Good teaching and progress by students • The leadership of the headteacher • How the college has improved in recent years | <p>In the view of some parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • Co-operation with home and information on their child's progress • Behaviour • Extra curricular activities |

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They consider homework, raised both in the parents' meeting and questionnaires, satisfactory. The other points were raised only in the questionnaires, but were considered at least satisfactory by parents present at the meeting. Inspectors judge cooperation with home and information for parents to be good. Behaviour is good overall, though there is some unhelpful behaviour in a few lessons. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

* In this main report, 'similar schools' refer to schools with similar proportions of students eligible for free school meals. Reference is also made to the progress made by students in this school and nationally between their performance in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and that in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4.

1. On entry to the college, standards are well below average levels, seen in the results of national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 in primary schools and reading tests taken by new students in the college. The attainment of boys is below that of girls, at this point. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, results in recent years have remained well below average in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They have been lower in English than in mathematics and science. Results for both boys and girls were well below average, with boys remaining further behind than girls. Results in teacher assessments for other subjects vary considerably, but are generally below the national average. Results are also well below those in similar schools, at this stage. Over the three years to 1999, the college's test results have not risen, though results nationally have risen somewhat over this period.

2. The college compiles a considerable amount of data on the test results of individual students, including their potential in verbal, quantitative and non-verbal tests taken in Years 7 and 9. These reveal considerably more intellectual potential than students have so far displayed, particularly in the area of literacy. Improving the levels of students' literacy is a key to the improvement of results overall in this stage.

3. Despite the apparent lack of improvement in test results between Key Stages 2 and 3, inspectors found that students achieve satisfactory progress over this stage. Responding to good teaching and the college's high expectations of their work and behaviour, students increase their knowledge and ability to apply it to a wide variety of new subjects. For example, in a Year 7 lesson in design and technology, students achieved satisfactory levels of understanding and made sound progress in designing a key fob. However, achievement in this and several other lessons seen could have been higher, with greater expectation and challenge. Generally, there is underachievement at this stage in English, in some aspects of geography and in lower sets in science.

4. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, results have been below, but not well below, the national average in recent years. They have been below average in the overall proportion of students gaining five or more grades in the A*-C range, 31 per cent on average over the last three years. In 1999, results at this level in French and drama were on the national average, while for this year Spanish results were above. Results in design and technology were not far behind national averages, and improved further in 2000. Other results were below average, while those in art and design and history were well below. Results were also below average in the achievement of five or more grades in the A*-G range, and for the total points scored.

5. Though GCSE results were below average for both boys and girls, boys were less far behind the national average for boys in points scored than girls were behind the national average for girls, in the three years to 1999. This reverses the previous trend in GCSE and also the trend in results at the end of Key Stage 3. So boys are making up lost ground over Key Stage 4 and achieving comparatively better progress than the girls. However, they have more to make up, and boys are anyway further behind girls nationally in GCSE. Despite the progress of the boys over this stage, girls therefore did better in 1999 than boys in English

language, French, humanities, mathematics and art, while boys did better than girls in geography.

6. For all students, though GCSE results have risen somewhat, the upward trend in points scored has been less than nationally. A high proportion of students, around 10 per cent of boys and 5 per cent of girls, have achieved no passes in recent years. This reflects the continuing low levels of attainment of some students and the college's policy of entering its lowest attainers for certificates of achievement rather than GCSE examinations in several subjects. Students have achieved success in a range of such certificates, including literacy, numeracy, history and modern foreign languages.

7. When GCSE results are compared with those in similar schools in 1999, students' performance was in line with the average, based on the number of students eligible for free school meals. Performance was well above average when based on the attainment of these students in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. In other words, students in this college have made much greater progress over Key Stage 4 than those in other schools achieving similar Key Stage 3 results in 1997. During the inspection, inspectors found that students achieved well at this key stage, making good progress in almost all subjects. For example, in a Year 11 geography lesson, students made good progress in understanding a GCSE topic in economic geography because the teacher was very well informed and prepared, communicating technical information clearly; as a result everyone was engaged with the task and made good progress in understanding it.

8. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls reported at the end of key stages are reflected in the quality of their work and achievement, seen in lessons and written work during the inspection. For example, in English, boys were less confident than girls in their use of literacy at Key Stage 3 and a greater proportion had only rudimentary writing skills. Girls were often more articulate than boys at this stage. At Key Stage 4, a similar pattern persists, though boys were beginning to increase their competence at this stage. In mathematics, girls at Key Stage 3 responded more quickly than boys, while boys were more hesitant in their grasp of numeracy. This difference continues at Key Stage 4, where boys did not achieve as much confidence in using and applying numerical skills as girls. In science, a similar position exists at Key Stage 3, but boys made up lost ground at Key Stage 4, gaining confidence in their ability to speak clearly and so to achieve more progress in practical work. Work during the key stages in other subjects reflects the pattern seen at the end of the stages. Generally, girls make surer progress than boys, as for example in art, ICT and modern foreign languages. However, boys' progress is somewhat better than girls' in history and geography, reflecting the position in English and their increasing skills in literacy.

9. Over recent years, attainment in terms of five or more grades at A*-C has improved somewhat. Results have generally reached the carefully calculated targets which the college has set itself. In 1998, results comfortably exceeded targets, while they were a little below in 1999. In 2000, they again exceeded targets. For 2001, the target for five or more GCSE passes is 30 per cent. This is appropriate, on the basis of results achieved in recent years and the levels of attainment of these students.

10. In 1999, the GCSE subjects in which students performed more highly than they did in others were French and child development, though only a minority of students take French in this college; their results in science and English were also rather above those in others. Those in art and design, information technology and, to a lesser extent, humanities were below the others. Over recent years, subjects which have been improving include drama and Spanish, though results declined for these in 2000, and design and technology. Results for all other subjects have remained generally below the national average, but those in history remain well below.

11. A level results have been well below the national average over recent years, in terms of points scored, and were particularly low in 1999. They have recovered this year to the levels of previous years. In most years, the great majority of students achieve passes and go on to worthwhile courses in higher or further education. For example, this year two thirds of A level students have gone into higher education and a fifth into further education. In the one year GNVQ course in 1999, over half the candidates achieved qualifications, compared with nearly three quarters nationally. In most years, some two thirds of students obtain qualifications and go either into further education or employment with training. In view of the often modest GCSE grades with which students begin their A level and GNVQ courses, their achievement and progress over the course are satisfactory.

12. Attainment in English is well below the expected level by the end of Key Stage 3, and below average in GCSE and A level results. Because low levels of literacy persist at Key Stages 3 and 4, and teaching is unsatisfactory in the sixth form, students' achievement and progress are unsatisfactory. They achieve less well than they should. Attainment in the various stages is similar in mathematics and science, but in these subjects students' achievement and progress are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4, reflecting teaching which is at least satisfactory and students' adequate grasp of numeracy. In the sixth form, students achievement and progress are satisfactory in science, and good in mathematics. Students achieve at least as well as they should, and often better. In other subjects, attainment is below the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 3 and below average in GCSE and A level examinations. Achievement and progress are good in most other subjects, indicating that students are doing at least as well as they should. There are particular strengths in design and technology and PE, while music and ICT across the curriculum are weak areas in which students could do far better, given the right conditions. In modern foreign languages, achievement and progress are satisfactory overall, and good where teaching is of high quality.

13. Students make satisfactory progress in the key skills of numeracy, which are sufficient to support the activities they are called to do. However, progress is unsatisfactory in the key skills of literacy and ICT across the curriculum. Levels of literacy are very low when students join the college, particularly for boys, and although students make some progress in improving them, improvement is not fast enough over Key Stage 3 for most students, who are held back in many subjects. Students with SEN are given good support and make good progress in literacy over this stage. In all subjects, many students enter Key Stage 4 with persisting low levels of literacy, though their progress is better at this stage, and GCSE results, for example in English, are higher than expected from students' performance at Key Stage 3. ICT skills are not well enough developed across the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, and levels of competence are low in many subjects.

14. The great majority of students with SEN make good progress in relation to their abilities. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Students with non-functional reading skills and specific learning difficulties make significant gains in their literacy and numeracy skills by the end of Key Stage 3. Some students improve their reading ages by as much as four years. Within the college's special support unit, the good standard of sensitive teaching and the effective use of modern technology encourage students to develop their basic skills whilst promoting self-esteem and positive attitudes towards learning. For example, Year 8 students organise themselves on spelling programmes, monitoring their achievements against their personal targets. They show good initiative, for example in selecting mathematical tasks. Students in Years 7 and 8 make good progress in a special literacy programme, for example in identifying simple nouns and adjectives and in explaining the function of different words within sentences. They make good progress in recognising the need for capital letters and punctuation points. They respond well to the teachers' high but

realistic challenges and try hard with the presentation of their work. By Year 9, students' handwriting has improved and some begin to develop joined writing styles. This good progress continues at Key Stage 4. Students achieve good success for their abilities in an range of GCSE and certificate courses. A number have made considerable gains since they joined the college. For example, 14 students took GCSE in 1999 with reading ages well below their actual ages, and all achieved pass grades, some in the A*-C range.

15. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have improved somewhat and results at the end of Key Stage 3 and at A level have generally maintained their previous positions. In view of the attainment of these students on entry to the college, this position is satisfactory. However, progress in literacy and ICT skills has been unsatisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Most students are enthusiastic about their work and for what the college provides. Though behaviour can sometimes be inconsiderate, in general this is an orderly community where relationships between staff and students are very good.

17. Students have good attitudes to their learning, they apply themselves well to the tasks set and they show a willingness to succeed. In many cases, this is because of the good assistance given to the lower attainers. Students with SEN are keen to work and learn. Generally, students ask intelligent questions and will guide teachers to give them the precise help they want. They have good listening skills. Higher attainers set their own targets and work conscientiously. All this has a marked effect on their learning. Only on occasions where teaching is poor do students become passive, needing regular reminders to concentrate, and reluctant to take part in oral tests and discussions.

18. Students are enthusiastic about the extra-curricular activities provided. They take part in sports training and events after school, and clubs and societies are well attended. The college council provides good ideas which have been put into effect.

19. Behaviour in class is good, in the great majority of lessons. It ranges from the excellent, seen for example in PE, where very responsible behaviour has a positive effect on standards, to the unsatisfactory, when students will sometimes take advantage of a situation where teachers are not managing the lesson tightly enough.

20. There has been a reduction in both fixed-term and permanent exclusions over the last few years. Although the college succeeds in dealing with many problems without resort to exclusion, there were 55 boys and 28 girls excluded for fixed terms in the last 12 months. Of these, less than 10 per cent have re-offended. Only three students, boys, were permanently excluded last year.

21. The personal development of students is good. As they mature, they become more considerate and form very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. They work well in small groups. They co-operate with one another, sharing and respecting resources. In science and technology, they share ideas and are aware of hygiene, health and safety factors. Students are proud to comment on their progress since joining the college. The work ethic is positive and helps students improve their standards. Though bullying is not a persistent problem, there are instances of this, particularly of thoughtless comment in the lower school. Such incidents are well handled by staff.

22. As they grow in confidence, students often make very good oral contributions in class and take a good part in the process of learning. Good examples of this are seen in PE, where students are encouraged to take an active part in solving dilemmas. Good discussions

develop in many senior classes and ideas are willingly shared. Some students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form make good use of the adult education centre to further their studies.

23. Older students are glad to take responsibility and initiative. For example, sixth formers help younger students with reading. They show initiative in the organisation of college events, for example in organising talent and fashion shows, raising money for charity and helping with primary school events.

24. Attendance in the last academic year was 88.3 per cent which is below the national average. Authorised absence was broadly in line with the national average. Students are generally punctual at the start of the day and for lessons.

25. Good standards of behaviour and attitude have been maintained, and have further improved, since the last inspection. Attendance, though still below average, has improved by some two per cent.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. Teaching is good overall, and is of similar quality at all stages. In lessons seen, it was excellent in three per cent, very good in 19, good in 40, satisfactory in 30, unsatisfactory in 6, and poor in two. No very poor teaching was seen. Unsatisfactory and poor teaching was seen in some English lessons, in music and in some lessons given by teachers when not teaching their specialist subjects. Most of the unsatisfactory or poor teaching was seen at Key Stage 3. In just over three lessons in five, teaching was at least good. This is a high proportion of effective teaching, which produces the good learning and progress seen in this inspection.

27. Teaching and learning are good in almost all subjects except English and music. In English, teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stages 3 and 4, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Though English teachers often teach well and give students a satisfactory education in literacy, they do not make enough difference, soon enough at Key Stage 3, to the low levels of literacy with which students enter the college. They do not give students enough chance to discuss and debate issues for themselves, and so give them the best chance to make enough progress. However, GCSE results are better than could be expected for these students, and a third of the 17 lessons seen were good, including two which were very good.

28. In music, the subject was being taught by a temporary teacher during the inspection, whose performance was not giving the students the levels of attainment needed to reach expected levels in the National Curriculum. There are weaknesses also in the teaching of the key skills of literacy and ICT across the curriculum, but these are caused by the lack of overall policies, training and provision rather than by unsatisfactory teaching.

29. Across all subjects, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and how to teach them. For example, in a Year 10 PE lesson, the teacher had a good grasp of the skills needed, for boys and girls, and handled a great variety of tasks well. Students learnt well as a result, consolidating techniques rapidly. In a Year 7 English lesson, a small group of students learnt very well because the teacher had a clear knowledge of their requirements and how to cater for each person.

30. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory in numeracy, but not in literacy and ICT skills. The quality of teaching in literacy is satisfactory when it takes place, and good in the withdrawal lessons for students with SEN. However, it is not regular or well organised enough to have the required impact on the very low standards of literacy which continue through Key Stage 3 and hold back progress at Key Stage 4. The teaching of ICT is at least

satisfactory in specialist lessons, but in subjects across the curriculum, lessons and schemes of work do not yet pay enough attention to the development of ICT skills.

31. Teachers' planning is good in most subjects and allows students to benefit from well planned and relevant lessons. For example, the teacher of a Year 10 lesson investigating rates of reaction had planned clearly, informing students of the features of a good investigation; as a result, students got on quickly and confidently, asked the right questions, and achieved a good result. In a few lessons, including some in science for lower years and sixth form English, teachers do not plan for enough personal challenge or variety in the lesson, so that students do not learn as well as they could. In such lessons, teachers' expectations are too modest, and students could achieve more. However, in most lessons, teachers' expectations are high, and students rise well to the challenge. For example, in a Year 10 lesson for the fast mathematics set, the teacher had high expectations of what his students could achieve in an introductory lesson to equations, and gave them a detailed, careful exposition, with plenty of useful illustration in words and diagrams. Students learnt very well because they knew exactly what was expected, and that their time was being very well used by an able mathematician. Expectations of what students should achieve in literacy are often too low, for example in English, where the one hour session could well be used more flexibly to include regular practice and testing in basic skills.

32. Teaching methods are good in most subjects. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson on speaking about the times of lessons, the teacher was very clear about the methods he would use and how the students should respond to each other's attempts, so that students learnt rapidly, getting the maximum benefit from the time available. In a Year 12 A level design and technology session on graphic skills, the teacher's method of recording initial ideas, then using the students' opinions to test and refine the original proposal, involved everyone and led to secure, reflective and valuable learning.

33. Teachers' management of students is their greatest strength. Parents were particularly impressed by the sense of order and purpose in the classroom and although both they and inspectors report some indiscipline, the great majority of lessons are well managed and productive. As an example, in a Year 10 GNVQ lesson in manufacturing, students learnt well because the teacher managed all aspects of the lesson ably, particularly the use of time throughout the session. Setting timed targets for students to complete the various tasks gave the lesson a drive and purpose which reflected the teacher's enthusiasm and commitment. In some lessons, time is not so clearly managed, and some 60 minute sessions could have contained a wider variety of activities.

34. Management of support staff was good when it was seen, largely in SEN withdrawal lessons, where teachers worked well with assistants to make an effective team. Students knew that they were in sure hands and that they were making progress in their work on basic skills. Teachers' use of resources is generally good, very good in PE. For example, the teacher of a Year 7 art class made very good use of different grades of pencil to illustrate the effects they could produce, and students learnt much new information rapidly and with enjoyment. The teacher of a Year 10 Youth Awards Scheme lesson on industry and technology made good use of the unit module and a well prepared student guide, so that students acquired new skills rapidly, including the use of a digital camera.

35. The quality and use of ongoing assessment in teachers' work are variable. They were unsatisfactory, for example, in several English lessons seen, where students said they had no idea of the standard they had reached or how much progress they were making. Regular assessment of students' work is perhaps best in modern foreign languages, where students know exactly how they have done and what they must do to improve. Assessment is also strong in mathematics, for example in a Year 8 mental mathematics lesson, greatly helped

by the scheme of work which included the regular assessment of students' attainment and so checked their progress at all times. These contrasts point to the fact that key skills such as literacy can well be taught in similar ways and that students would immediately benefit from knowing where they are in literacy and how they can improve their performance.

36. The use of homework is satisfactory. Generally, teachers select valid tasks and expect a reasonable standard of work. Marking, however, is variable. Some carefully completed work is hardly marked, but there are other examples of very well marked work which clearly encourage students to do their best.

37. Teaching by the specialist staff in the student support centre is good. Teachers have a very good rapport with their students, plan lessons carefully and have high expectations of them. As a result, students achieve well, making good progress in their work and social confidence. The quality of teaching and support in the nationally accredited Youth Award Scheme is very good, as are relationships between staff and students. Teachers focus well on literacy and numeracy, providing a relevant and varied programme of life skills. Humour is used effectively to create a positive atmosphere, and students respond by concentrating and taking pride in their work. For example, one student made two sample designs to compare which could be most effectively reproduced on the computer. Teachers use skill and tact in defusing potential problems. Students recognise teachers' expectations of good behaviour, and consequently disruption is minimal.

38. Outside the support centre, teaching for individual needs by subject teachers is very good, for example in science, design and technology, PE and modern languages. The SEN department has organised an extensive programme of support in the classroom by assistant staff, particularly in English, mathematics and design and technology, but little such support was seen in the lessons visited during the inspection.

39. All departments have a policy to promote equality of opportunity, except English. With this exception, all teachers are aware of their policy, except in history, where awareness is developing. In science, there is a positive move to make science more attractive to girls. In English, despite the lack of a policy, schemes of work tackle issues of racism, sexism and disability.

40. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved. The last report indicated sound standards overall, with good standards in a significant minority of lessons. Teaching is now good overall, in the majority of lessons seen.

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

41. Since the previous inspection, whole school curriculum leadership and co-ordination have become a major responsibility of one of the deputy heads and good lines of curriculum management have been established with faculties. The curriculum is subject to systematic and regular review.

42. Deficiencies identified at Key Stage 3 in the previous inspection report have been satisfactorily rectified. This has improved the progression, continuity and balance of the curriculum within the key stage. The Key Stage 3 curriculum now offers good breadth and balance. The time allocated to the core subjects is higher than the national average. This is a good feature, given the low prior attainment levels in these subjects. There is, however, no strategy yet for teaching literacy across the curriculum despite low levels of attainment in this area. A very promising start has been made in improving literacy, in the summer school for students before they join Year 7, now held for three years. Provision for literacy in the support centre is good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 except for religious education, where the agreed syllabus in Years 8 and 9 cannot be fully taught within the available time, which is shared with personal and social education.

43. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is of good quality overall. It has recently been revised and in Year 10 is well planned to meet the particular learning needs of students. It is innovative and provides a broad core which includes, as well as the National Curriculum subjects, a GCSE course in the humanities which includes religious education and PSE as well as history and geography. Almost all students in Year 10 follow a course in a modern foreign language at an appropriate level, either French or Spanish, and this is a considerable improvement on previous arrangements. Students choose two additional courses from a choice of nine including child development, drama, information technology and a Youth Award Scheme based on key skills. A further choice is available with the recent introduction of the GNVQ part 1 course in manufacturing as an alternative to the technology core and one of the options. A range of certificates of achievement is also available. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides flexible and relevant programmes of study for students across the attainment range and in particular the lower attainers. However, the teaching of information technology across the curriculum, an issue in the previous inspection report, is still unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are met at Key Stage 4, except for information technology where the college does not make full provision and the subject is not formally assessed and reported on to parents of all students.

44. A varied and good sixth form curriculum is offered, which provides opportunities which meet the needs and aspirations of students. In Year 13, a range of nine A level courses is studied at the College during the day and three A level subjects in the Adult Education Centre in the evenings. Subject group sizes are often small. In Year 12, the curriculum has been drawn up to meet curriculum 2000 requirements, with students selecting four AS level subjects, and AS general studies which is taken over two years together with a key skills certificate course. Foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses are run in collaboration with a local college of further education, for example health and social care, media, business, information technology, engineering and leisure and tourism. This partnership also provides a choice of vocational NVQ courses, for example in vehicle maintenance and valeting. In addition, Kirkby College provides further enrichment for all students in the form of work shadowing opportunities, planned paired reading support for students in Years 7 and 8, and a weekly tutor period which includes a component of PSE. However, religious education has not been identified as a separate timetable period within the general studies course. In all other respects the sixth form curriculum meets statutory requirements. The combination of courses in Kirkby College, the local college of further

education and the adult education centre gives students a wide, well designed sixth form curriculum, suitable for all levels of attainment.

45. A notable feature of the curriculum is the very good support it gives for the personal development of students. The college has been very successful in providing this support, and so giving these students much-needed confidence in themselves and their potential to succeed. This is seen in four particular respects.

46. First, there is excellent extra-curricular provision overall, with that in physical education and technology outstanding. A wide range of sporting activities is offered through extra-curricular clubs and inter-form competitions that involve the majority of students within the college. Students have very good opportunities of enriching their studies in technology, through links with local industry. These companies have provided generously in materials and resources for use by students, and industrial elements have been productively developed in courses. The college holds the *Industry Matters* award for having the best collaborative links with industry and the most effective *Young Enterprise* show in the region. Many students participate in activities involving drama, music and art and many subjects make their facilities available at lunchtimes and after school for activities including a homework club. Some excellently motivated, high attaining students in Year 10 are taking a French GCSE course at night school. There is also a number of educational visits in subjects across the curriculum including visits to theatres, poetry evenings, annual day trips to France in modern foreign languages, and a residential course of outdoor activities in physical education. Students enter for competitions in English.

47. Second, the support given to students with SEN by the support centre is very good. It provides a good education in basic skills for these students and ensures that all students follow nationally accredited courses at Key Stage 4, including literacy and numeracy examinations and certificates of achievement. Higher attaining students at Key Stage 4 receive extra tuition during lunchtime and at the end of the school day and work towards GCSE examinations which they take earlier than normal, particularly in mathematics. Starting in Year 9 and continuing through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, those with above-average abilities are encouraged to consider higher education through the college's links with the Sheffield University's early outreach scheme. This scheme is well established and successful. The college's support unit also provides an outreach and home tuition service to those students who are temporarily out of college.

48. Third, provision for PSE is very good. This is a very well run subject where there has been much improvement and a good sense of direction. The college has recently reviewed its PSE programme, which is now more appropriate for each key stage. ICT has been introduced to most aspects of the programme, and funding has improved. Programmes now place emphasis on gaining skills, knowledge and understanding. The study of themes on particular days has been introduced, for instance sex education and drugs awareness are dealt with on one day in Year 9. Drugs awareness is covered from Year 7.

49. Fourth, there is a dedicated and effective careers department. This makes very good provision for careers advice, work experience and work shadowing as well as guiding students as they plan post-16 and further education. Students are introduced to think about careers through the PSE programme from Year 8. By Year 10, they have started to plan, with mock interviews often conducted by members of the community. Students greatly benefit from organising their own work experience, guided by the department. The department uses outside agencies well and works closely with the community. It maintains close contact with colleges and universities. Information is backed up at all stages by a well-stocked library with suitable electronic data.

50. Links with other schools and colleges are good overall. The college has good relationships with its family of five primary schools, celebrated, for example, in an annual joint concert. Information on attainment and personal circumstances at the time of transfer is detailed and students come well prepared for the transition. However, with the exception of English, where contact is good, departments' links with colleagues in the primary schools are patchy. Principals of schools and colleges meet regularly, and students benefit greatly from the adult education courses provided in the college, some attending A level courses provided by this means.

51. Links with the community are very good and support the curriculum well. The college benefits from the support of local businesses with materials and advice, particularly in technology. Visits by students to industry and by industry to the college are very extensive and well developed, and form a very significant element of the curriculum in design and technology. The local Rotary Club helps in a number of ways, for example in support of students planning their careers and in promoting and judging design competitions. The college benefits from close links with the community hospital, which has provided career days and helps with the PSE programme. There is a local youth forum which aims to further pride in the community. Students regularly represent the college on the forum where they may be expected to lobby local councillors for improvements to the area. There are annual awards for the student offering the best services to the college and to the community.

52. Equality of access to the curriculum is good, except in ICT at Key Stage 4, which is not taught adequately across the curriculum. In PE the breadth and balance of subject provision and opportunities are very good for all students. Extra-curricular activities in PE extend this provision very well, for example in the sports lottery funding for external coaches of girls' football. In technology, all courses are available to boys and girls. All GCSE courses are open to both sexes, while the curriculum in humanities contributes well to the debate on gender, for example in discussing farming in Nigeria. The gender balance in sets and groups is good in most cases.

53. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship but the weekly assemblies of each year group and upper/lower school are times when spiritual, moral, social or cultural themes are considered. Some of these assemblies are collective worship, which include stories relevant to students' experiences, with a reading from scriptures and a time for prayer. The latter is introduced to be inclusive of those with faith and those of no faith. Students respond well, bowing their heads and respecting each other's response. Ministers from local churches visit and the 'Hands and Feet' group from the Ashwood Community Church take assemblies regularly. Students contribute to assemblies with dance and drama. A 'theme for the week' is provided. This is often linked to the time or season, such as 'memory and remembrance' for early November. However, there is little provision for spiritual development within registration and form tutorial time or in individual lessons. There are some times, though, when a sense of wonder can be shared, for example when rock from outer space can be handled in science, or during a visit to the holocaust museum. The recent death of a student was a time of shared grief and counselling. The spiritual experiences of others are considered in religious education through the worship of other faiths and visits to, for example, the Sikh gurdwara in Nottingham. Students study the impact of faith on renaissance art. Students are encouraged to marvel at the diversity of landform in creation during geography lessons, while in physical education students reflect on individual and group performance.

54. The college's provision for moral development is good. The college policy emphasises fairness and respect for each other. Members of staff are good role models and students respond well. In physical education, there is a very high expectation of behaviour and very good spirit in competitive games. Several subject areas contribute to discussions

on morals: for example, in English the treatment of animals and of teenage pregnancy; good stewardship of irreplaceable natural resources in geography; sex education in PSE and issues of racism in art and religious education. The Nottinghamshire police anti-drugs team visits the college and senior students help them in their work with pupils in primary schools. The college council chooses both local and national charities to support each year. The staff motivate students well and lead by example. One member of staff did a sponsored walk to the Everest base camp to support a school in Nepal.

55. Provision for social development is equally good. Students learn successfully to work and socialise together. Year 8 students help in the induction of Year 7 students. Staff share a meal with Year 13 students at the end of their time in the sixth form. The wide range of extra curricular activities, some after school and others residential, helps promote social development. Co-operation is expected in physical education and drama; sharing information in ICT; group discussions in PSE and in collaborative painting in art. Students join in social events in the town, for example in local carnivals and town twinning arrangements.

56. The college's provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Some subject areas make little provision, but others such as PSE, humanities, history and RE recognise the need to prepare students for life in a multicultural society. Accordingly, issues such as the persecution of minorities or stereotyping are planned for in the curriculum. There is a good programme of exchanges with students in other countries. Students share in Ashanti tales in English literature. Within religious education, students experience the cultures of world faiths, for example through videos about the Jewish way of life and use of the Internet to explore other faiths. Students study ethnic culture in art. The college has weeks when there is an artist or an author 'in residence' who seeks to deepen the multicultural experience.

57. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the design and implementation of the curriculum, and progress has been satisfactory in provision for students' personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

58. Students are well cared for in a safe environment. Child protection matters are carefully dealt with by staff who are kept up to date on the latest recommended practice. The health and safety of students are well managed. There are good policy documents for health and safety and good practice is evident throughout the college, in particular in science and technology. Regular checks are made, including risk assessment by staff and a governor. Minor items are dealt with promptly and less pressing items are dealt with as funds are available. Provision for the health of students is good. The college nurse attends regularly and there is a well-equipped medical room.

59. Students are well advised as they come into Year 7. Very good records of their academic attainment and personal circumstances are built up from the primary schools. Students know who to ask for help or guidance, and consult their teachers, tutor or head of year. Tutorial periods are mainly used to monitor homework diaries. Little or no time is given to academic monitoring by tutors and individual targets are not set for all. Only in the case of under-achieving students are report cards used to monitor progress over short periods. Otherwise, methods of monitoring progress generally are undeveloped. However, there is strong personal and academic guidance given in some subjects, particularly modern languages and in the sixth form generally.

60. Arrangements to maintain and improve attendance are effective, with much time well spent by tutors, the office staff and heads of year. The college makes every effort to impress on parents the need for regular attendance, relating good attendance to academic

achievement. Senior management uses the attendance statistics well to spot trends, initiate awards for improved attendance, and advise individual parents. Each student's attendance record is commented on in the annual reports to parents. The college maintains close liaison with the education welfare service, which makes a valuable contribution to improving ties with families. The college has devised an excellent reward for any student with a 100 per cent record of attendance by the end of Year 11, when the deserving student is whisked to college in a smart limousine.

61. Parents comment that behaviour has improved. Faculties have good codes of conduct, which emphasise positive behaviour as the pre-condition of good learning. Exclusions, though still quite high, have been much reduced through careful monitoring and with the co-operation of parents. Sanctions are appropriate. The use of the quiet room prevents an individual's misbehaviour from upsetting learning. It also gives an opportunity for students to reflect on their behaviour and how their actions affect others. Parents are involved if a student's behaviour is giving cause for concern. In these cases an education plan is put together, which is closely monitored by the pastoral staff.

62. A well taught health education programme covers issues such as diet, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases and personal hygiene. Outside speakers are brought in to cover specialist subjects. The careers service gives extensive guidance on students' options. The system by which students organise their own work experience is very beneficial. Tutors report that students mature noticeably after they have completed this preparation and have experienced work in the adult world.

63. Since the last inspection, there has been much work done on attendance which, though still below average, has improved. The college has maintained good standards in the other pastoral issues covered in the last report. However, rigorous target setting for individuals and assessment policies remain undeveloped.

64. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress lack consistency. The college's policy provides a good framework, enabling faculties to develop assessment strategies to meet their own special requirements. However, insufficient focussed monitoring of faculties by line managers has led to a wide range of practices. Good practices exist in modern languages, design and technology and religious education, but they have not been adopted by other subject areas. Good use is made of end-of-module tests related to National Curriculum criteria by some subjects, but this is not always the case. The accuracy of assessment in geography is not reliable and in history does not relate to National Curriculum criteria. The assessment of ICT across the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is weak and does not meet requirements at Key Stage 4. The annual monitoring of examination results by senior management leads to greater accountability by heads of faculties and the setting of global targets for the next year. The further refinement of presenting individual subjects with targets of their own is not undertaken. Monitoring of students' exercise books by heads of faculties is inconsistent. As a result of all these factors, the college is not taking the advantage it might of its assessment policies to raise standards in subjects.

65. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is good, enabling the college to formulate new courses for sixth form students, and subjects to change examination syllabuses or to fine-tune their schemes of work. It is strong in design and technology and religious education where test and examination results are analysed and adjustments made to schemes of work. Centrally-stored assessment data provides faculties and teachers with students' Key Stage 2 levels in national tests, cognitive ability test scores (Year 7 and Year 9) and Key Stage 3 test results. In some areas, this information, in conjunction with faculty-based assessment, is being used effectively to provide students with subject specific targets or, as in mathematics, to place students on the appropriate starting

point of their individualised learning scheme. The data is also used effectively to identify higher attaining students who link with Sheffield University, so raising their academic ambitions.

66. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are weak. The procedures in most areas do not enable students to be aware of the progress they are making. Modern languages, however, has excellent booklets and RE has record cards for students that provide them with National Curriculum level descriptors. In addition to this, modern languages has self-assessment and excellent suggestions for students' target setting. Students are not aware in many subjects of their National Curriculum levels, nor of their GCSE predicted grades until after the mock examinations. Teachers' own records make it difficult to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses, to set targets in National Curriculum terms and to monitor students' progress. However, many heads of faculties say that their teachers know the students well and provide them with the additional support that is required. The results of Year 11 mock examinations in November are collected centrally and used purposefully to identify those students who need mentoring to reach the target of five A*-C GCSE grades.

67. Assessment procedures for students with SEN are good. Students are assessed on admission. Where appropriate, individual education plans and programmes of study are matched to their needs, although planned targets are not always specific or measurable. Students are closely involved with setting their targets, which are carefully monitored. Regular meetings with support staff, subject teachers and external agencies are well recorded.

68. In assessment practice, too little progress has been made since the last inspection, as subjects are still at varying stages of development. The use of assessment information to promote higher standards is still inconsistent and needs further development. Over the years, the college has gathered a great deal of data and has shared the analysis of it with heads of faculties, which will be invaluable when the new computerised assessment data system is in place.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. The college makes every effort to involve parents in the life of the college, and its links with parents are effective. The parents in turn are supportive, and have positive opinions of the college. They appreciate the hard work of staff and recognise the improvements in the college, in particular in the attitudes and behaviour of students. They see the headteacher as an effective leader and are pleased with improvements in

communications and the dress code. There is an active Parent School Association which can call on extra help from parents to raise funds or to help run college events.

70. Views expressed in the parents' questionnaires and meeting were very positive in general. Parents felt that the college had improved markedly in recent years, under the leadership of the present headteacher. It expected hard work and good achievement, and helped students to do their best. It particularly helped them to become mature and responsible, providing a very good range of activities for them and expecting good attitudes and participation. Parents thought both teaching and progress good. Some felt that homework should be better organised, though others considered it satisfactory. Some other anxieties were raised in the questionnaires, but not the meeting. These issues concerned co-operation with the home, behaviour and extra-curricular activities. Inspectors have found activities excellent and co-operation with the home good. They have found behaviour good overall, though there is some unhelpful behaviour in a few lessons.

71. The college responds well to parents' requests. Though parents are not greatly involved in its regular affairs, their partnership with the college has a good effect on students' attitudes to education. Open evenings are well structured for Year 6 students before joining the college. Review meetings of students' work encourage a fair number of parents to attend. Many of those who do not attend are contacted by telephone. Staff and students provide demonstrations of lessons to add interest and information for the parents.

72. The college takes trouble with its communications with parents. Letters home are frequent, interesting and written in friendly terms. The telephone or home visits are used when other communications fail. The governors' annual report is carefully prepared and the prospectus gives good information. The annual reports to parents are generally well worded and cover details that parents ought to know. However, there are some inconsistencies within departments, principally in English.

73. Links between the SEN department and parents are good and parents regularly receive information on their children's progress. The governors' annual report to parents gives comprehensive information on the college's special needs provision, which fully meets statutory requirements.

74. Homework planners are used well and there are good documents and leaflets about courses. Parents are involved in cases of under-achievement by meetings in college or home visits. Parents are similarly contacted about poor behaviour and the need to improve attendance. The college involves parents with policies and advice about option choices.

75. Since the last inspection the college continues to work closely with parents to the general benefit of students.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. The headteacher and key staff give good leadership. They work well together to promote high standards. They have been very successful in improving the curriculum and in providing many programmes which now offer students the chance to gain confidence and raise their own expectations. For example, the development of the support centre for students with SEN and of such opportunities as the Sheffield University outreach programme for students from backgrounds without a history of higher education have given a sense of direction and purpose to students' education. Together, the head and senior staff have built a good network of support over recent years, adding to students' self-confidence and the reputation of the college with parents. As a result, standards of attainment improve as students move into Key Stage 4 and GCSE results are higher than could be expected from

the attainment of the students on entry. The effectiveness of leadership is also seen in the firm reflection of the college's aims in daily life. For example, among eight well chosen and realised aims there are specific intentions for the achievement of a good curriculum and for students to experience success.

77. Raising expectations and providing good opportunities in the curriculum have been the college's well chosen priorities so far. As these have started to succeed, the shared commitment to improve standards has grown. The college now finds itself in a position to monitor success and improvement, in order further to accelerate this process, and the will to do so has increased among staff. So far, however, the college has not introduced a convincing programme for the monitoring of teaching and learning, though senior staff monitor newly qualified teachers well, have monitored areas of concern and have taken effective action in some cases. The improvement of classroom practice is now the first aim in the development plan, and the college aims to reintroduce a system of team appraisal in order to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the performance of faculties and subjects.

78. The lack of an overall programme for monitoring performance, though unsatisfactory, does not mean that the college is unaware of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a good development plan which clearly reflects the key issues for action identified in this inspection report, and appropriate targets for overall performance at the end of Key Stage 4 have been set and well met in two of the last three years. The college has interpreted a great deal of statistical information and has identified students in danger of underachieving in GCSE. However, it has not used this information to set targets for individual subjects and all students, who therefore remain less accountable for their performance than in many schools.

79. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. For example, it has regular contact with the college through a system of governors linked to faculties, a good structure of committees and a clear grasp of financial detail. It publishes an informative annual report and is closely in touch with local opinion. Although it reviews the performance of subjects after examination results have been published, it has not developed an overall system for reviewing the college's strengths and weaknesses, and will be better placed to do so when the senior team has introduced such a system itself.

80. Leadership by heads of faculty, departments and years is generally good. Leadership of the SEN department is very good. This department is strongly led by an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who manages the provision of special needs throughout the college. The support unit also provides an outreach and home-tuition service to those students who are temporarily out of college. The SENCO co-ordinates meetings with feeder primary schools to identify and prioritise funding needs, which are met through a bidding system to the local education authority.

81. The standard of the SEN departmental documentation is very good, with excellent systems in place for monitoring the students' progress over time. Registers record the students with special needs and those with higher than average ability. However, monitoring the progress of the latter group is not well enough developed.

82. The number of students with SEN has increased since the previous inspection. Since then, the creation of a strong support unit and a revised curriculum are significant improvements in meeting the students' special needs. Although in-class support is an area for development in some subject areas, the college's provision for the students with SEN is a strength of the college.

83. The college makes very good strategic use of its financial resources. It plans its budgets and monitors expenditure with care. It achieves economy in the ratio of staff to

students and the percentage of staff contact time. The sixth form is cost-effective. Though small, very good arrangements with the local college of further education and the adult education centre at the college mean that a wide range of courses can be economically provided. The cost per student is in line with that received for students' education in the sixth form. Across the range of its provision, the college ensures that resources are allocated to the areas of greatest need. For example, it has sought and acquired funding for developing support for students with SEN, has allocated a greater than average amount of time to the teaching of English and mathematics to encourage the development of key skills, and has provided much needed resources to improve the health and safety of students. However, it has not managed to find sufficient funding for the development of ICT across the curriculum, though there are good examples of its use in particular rooms and in the central administration of the college.

84. The college makes extremely good use of specific grants. For example, funding has been secured for a community initiative in music which will benefit all the local primary schools, a very successful summer school in literacy has now completed its third year and European funding continues to support an ambitious link with schools in Finland and other nations. The college attracts considerable extra sums by such initiatives, to the great benefit of its curriculum and students. It applies the principles of best value well. For example, it compares its own results with those of other schools carefully, has compared what it offers in the sixth form with that offered by other schools, consults clearly in the college and with parents about ways to improve the education provided, and uses competitive tendering procedures well.

85. Since the last inspection, the college has made satisfactory progress overall in the improvement of its leadership. The development plan is now well presented and monitored. The effectiveness of senior management has improved, for example in its linking to faculties and the positive discussions this has produced. However, insufficient progress has been made in the regular monitoring of teaching and of the overall effectiveness of faculties.

86. The number of teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the college is adequate for the curriculum. There are 45 full-time teachers and a further 2.4 part-time teachers. The college also uses the services of four visiting instrumentalists who provide support in music. The range of qualifications and experience is broad and suitably related to the needs of subjects. In some instances, however, the use of non-specialists adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning. At both key stages, students with SEN receive in-class support. However, there are insufficient learning assistants. Consequently, although subject teachers are fully aware of the needs of their students, these are not always met.

87. A problem in English noted at the time of the last inspection persists. Of thirteen staff, six are non-specialists. Though their joint contribution is no more than 10 per cent of the timetable, this makes for communication difficulties. The college acknowledges these problems and seeks to solve them by new appointments when possible and by redeployment of teachers from other areas. Difficulties being encountered are recruitment of suitable staff and financial constraints.

88. The management structure of the college is clearly constructed and staff responsibilities are well defined. Job descriptions have been updated to match management and teaching roles in response to criticism made in the last report. However, the senior management team is almost all male. The top 15 managers of the college are men, except one, the headteacher. This is a very unequal gender distribution in the decision-taking team of the college. There is no committee for equality of opportunity.

89. Staff development opportunities in some areas are good. In physical education, for example, the Nottinghamshire PE Forum provides opportunities for working with other schools and developing new courses. In ICT, there are good opportunities for staff to extend their knowledge. In English, training is provided in the attempt to reduce the impact of non-specialist teaching. The college makes good use of its regular training days to cover issues of relevance for the whole staff. For example, last school year saw one day on the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and one on teams and teamwork. Induction procedures are effective and the college is well placed to offer initial teacher training.

90. The college's regular appraisal scheme has been suspended, having run with success. The college has well developed plans to reintroduce a model of team appraisal, and four faculties are preparing to join in a pilot exercise this school year. Where a form of appraisal is operating, results are positive. For example, in mathematics the appraisal of the whole department has led to an increase in team spirit and mutual support.

91. Non-teaching staff are effective in the support they provide. There is good technician support in ICT; in science, good support is provided by two part-time technicians. Office staff are efficient, co-operative and helpful. They are very experienced in their roles, and the presence of a systems manager with detailed knowledge of the college and of teaching is an asset to the college.

92. The college has maintained a satisfactory level of staffing and staff development since the last inspection.

93. Accommodation is satisfactory for the number of students and is well maintained. Generally, this allows for the effective teaching of the curriculum, with the major shortcoming of the lack of a school hall. The resource and library areas, though spacious, are not being well used, partly because they have to serve some of the functions of a school hall. Facilities for learning have been improved by separating corridors from classrooms and by continuing refurbishment programmes. There has been successful liaison with relevant authorities to upgrade external sporting facilities. Some external courts and playground areas suffer from unsafe surfaces. Changing facilities in the park are poor and some college toilets do not function properly.

94. Facilities for specialist subjects are satisfactory. Art has two well-furnished specialist studios, which allows the subject to be taught effectively. English, mathematics and science each have their own areas which allow for shared ideas and teamwork. The drama studio partly compensates for the lack of a hall, but has poor lighting and curtains. Accommodation for teaching students with SEN is good, with the co-ordinator's office well placed within the support unit. However, there are no facilities or access for the physically handicapped, though the college has raised the issue. A further classroom provides a teaching base for group work, and houses a range of appropriate literature and text books.

95. There has been no improvement in the unsatisfactory provision for music. The room is cramped with insufficient space for practical activities. The practice room is well away from the main music area, which leads to problems with supervision. Some rooms are small for a college of this size with modern languages and mathematics especially cramped for

larger groups and other areas having cramped storage spaces. One food technology area has been completely refurbished, but a textile classroom is small and unattractive in appearance. The food technology room is now a positive place in which to learn, but the textiles room does not encourage a good attitude towards the subject.

96. The college has made satisfactory headway in maintaining its accommodation. Refurbishment is based on careful auditing, including necessary health and safety and security measures. The provision of a hall remains a priority as does regulating heating.

97. The college has adequate resources in most departments. The proportion of the budget spent on resources is higher than the national average. The provision of textbooks is satisfactory in most departments but in some it is insufficient to allow students to take them home. The effectiveness of teaching in modern foreign languages and geography is reduced because of a lack of overhead projectors. The teaching of music is adversely affected by the lack of instruments. There is some percussion and a small number of keyboards. Design and technology benefits from its links with local industry and is well equipped. Physical education is able to enhance its teaching through the extra facilities provided by the community centre. Resources for SEN are good. They are well designed, chosen and used.

98. The college has four well equipped computer rooms, available for all departments, and also a room for the design and technology faculty. These are well used during the college day and increasingly by students during the lunch hour. Modern computers are supported by sufficient printers and other peripheral equipment. The suites are linked to the Internet. There are additional computers in some departments but the overall provision is low and the use of ICT across the curriculum is limited. The extensive use of the computer rooms during the day for timetabled courses limits their use by other departments.

99. The library and resources building is designed to provide a welcoming study area. However, it is both under-equipped and under-used. Concern for security has resulted in the provision of only one computer. The library stock is poor and borrowing rates are very low. Although departments make good use of the area during the day, its use by students during the lunch hour and after school is very limited. There is no full-time librarian, though the assistant who has responsibility for the area performs her duties well. Records of book losses and statistics on book use are inadequate. The area fails to provide the college with appropriate facilities for resource-based learning. The college benefits from the proximity of a well run local library which runs after school sessions for students.

100. Since the last inspection the college has increased the proportion of its budget spent on resources. The library remains poorly stocked and does not provide sufficient support for learning. Resources in music remain inadequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

101. The governors and senior team should:

- (1) Improve the quality of students' learning in English, particularly by
 - Preparing good schemes of work across the department,
 - Improving departmental planning, and
 - Improving the quality of teaching, for some teachers.(See paragraphs 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113)
- (2) Improve levels of literacy across the college, by
 - Training all staff in best practice in the teaching of literacy, and
 - Including good opportunities for the teaching of literacy in the schemes of work of all departments.

(See paragraphs 104, 106, 107, 108, 114, 115)

- (3) Increase the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) across the curriculum, so that
- The curriculum meets statutory requirements for the provision of ICT at Key Stage 4,
 - Opportunities for using ICT are increased in the schemes of work of all faculties, and
 - Sufficient resources are provided, when possible, for students to have regular access to ICT.

(See paragraphs 83, 98, 169, 170, 172, 173)

- (4) Provide systematic and consistent monitoring of standards of work within all subjects by the senior management team and heads of faculty, particularly in
- Teaching and professional development,
 - The curriculum and schemes of work, particularly in English, music and the sixth form general studies course, and
 - The assessment of students' work.

(See paragraphs 64, 76)

- (5) Improve the monitoring and support of students' progress, particularly by
- Using relevant data to set targets for the performance of each subject and student,
 - Regularly assessing the progress students make towards these targets, including targets in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and
 - Training heads of year and tutors in responsibility for the overall monitoring of the progress of individual students.

(See paragraphs 64, 78)

- (6) Re-establish the quality of teaching and learning in music, on the appointment of a permanent teacher in charge, especially in
- Revising and improving schemes of work for all years, and
 - Extending the musical life of the college.

(See paragraphs 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193)

102. Key issues 2, 3, 4 and 5 are already items for development in the college development plan. Items 1, 4 and 6 were key issues for development in the last inspection report.

103. In addition, the college should consider the following less significant weaknesses for inclusion in its action plan following this inspection:

- Providing funds as soon as possible for the improvement of the library area as a well equipped centre for the encouragement of learning.
(See paragraph 99)
- The further improvement of attendance.
(See paragraph 24)
- Sufficient time for the teaching of the agreed syllabus in religious education (RE) in Years 8 and 9, and the adequate representation of RE in the sixth form.
(See paragraphs 42, 44)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 156 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | 45 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3 | 19 | 40 | 30 | 6 | 2 | 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 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|------------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 703 | 65 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 165 in all | |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 2 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 167 | 1 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 0 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 22 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 37 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 9.8 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.4 |
| 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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 70 | 71 | 141 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 11 | 29 | 20 |
| | Girls | 40 | 34 | 18 |
| | Total | 51 | 63 | 38 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 36 (32) | 45 (42) | 38 (32) |
| | National | 63 (65) | 62(60) | 55 56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 5 (16) | 23 (20) | 6 (10) |
| | National | 28 (35) | 38(36) | 23(27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 17 | 32 | 27 |
| | Girls | 42 | 36 | 30 |
| | Total | 59 | 68 | 57 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 42 (37) | 48 (41) | 40 (44) |
| | National | 64 (61) | 64 (64) | 60 (61) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 17 (18) | 23(28) | 10(22) |
| | National | 31 (30) | 37 (37) | 28 (30) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 58 | 67 | 125 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 16 | 50 | 53 |
| | Girls | 22 | 58 | 64 |
| | Total | 38 | 108 | 117 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 30 (35) | 86 (80) | 94 (87) |
| | National | 46.6 (44.6) | 90.9(89.8) | 95.8 (95.6) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 31 (31.8) |
| | National | 38 (36.8) |

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 10 | 17 | 27 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent | | |
|---|---|--------|------|--|--------|-----|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | 6.4 | 5,.8 | 6.0 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| National | 17,7 | 18.1 | 17.9 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 2.8 |

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

| Vocational qualifications | | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|--------|----------------|
| Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | 12 | 66 |
| | National | | 72.9 |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 2 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 1 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 765 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | | |
| Black – African heritage | | |
| Black – other | | |
| Indian | | |
| Pakistani | | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 83 | 3 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | | |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 47.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16.2 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 8.4 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 255 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 79 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 23.6 |
| Key Stage 4 | 17.8 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Financial year | 2000 |
|----------------|------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 2107866 |
| Total expenditure | 2078988 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2707 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -51784 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | -22906 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 768 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 72 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 39 | 50 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 43 | 50 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 21 | 64 | 10 | 1 | 4 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 21 | 58 | 18 | 3 | 0 |
| The teaching is good. | 33 | 56 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 36 | 53 | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 54 | 39 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 61 | 38 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 33 | 46 | 17 | 1 | 3 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 40 | 46 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 32 | 60 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 31 | 53 | 11 | 0 | 5 |

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting of parents, standards were thought at least satisfactory and progress very good. The school helps students by being approachable and giving students plenty of help. It promotes positive values, particularly of respect, and encourages students to take a pride in themselves and their work. Behaviour is better than in the past, and is satisfactory. There were mixed views on homework. Links with parents are good, and the college is always willing to listen and to contact parents. Improvement has been very substantial, particularly in the attitudes and behaviour of students. The headteacher has greatly improved standards in the college.

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

ENGLISH

104. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national average, below the average for similar schools, and below those for mathematics and science within the college. Results for girls are better than the results for boys. Standards are low on entry but by the end of Year 9 most students are still attaining standards well below the national average, indicating lack of progress through the key stage. Standards of attainment are not high enough at Key Stage 3, but are high enough in relation to the abilities of these students by the end of Key Stage 4, when students achieve more than expected.

105. GCSE results are better than Key Stage 3 tests would predict. The average points score per student is better than the college average. Girls perform better than boys by a margin that is less than the difference nationally, but both are obtaining results below the national average. Results in English literature are similar to those for English language. Results in drama have been level with the national average in two of the last five years. A level literature results fluctuate but are generally well below the national average.

106. Standards observed in lessons were in line with these results. At Key Stage 3, standards of spelling, grammar, punctuation and width of vocabulary are well below those expected nationally. The range of writing is narrow and, despite lessons on the use of the thesaurus, students seldom use words imaginatively in composing stories or poems. By the end of the key stage, students know what happens in a Shakespeare play, but lack confidence in discussing the poetry or dramatic devices. In Year 9 all students create a newspaper using a computer. Some results are good, with use of mature language and imaginative lay-out. Generally, however, students use information technology too little. All classes in Years 7 and 8 now have a reading lesson each week, and are heard reading aloud. Most students can pronounce the words correctly, but are weak in explaining what they mean. They describe their books to the class, and discuss the use of accent and dialect. They also practise speaking in a Year 9 unit of drama. Overall at this stage, despite good work in some lessons, most students are still failing to make the best use of their abilities. Their achievement is therefore unsatisfactory. This is because the teaching, though satisfactory overall at this stage, is not well enough focussed for the needs of these particular students on improving the key skill of literacy. Students cannot therefore go on to make the amount of progress they could. The weakest students are achieving better in relation to their prior attainment than the most able.

107. Standards improve through Key Stage 4, but by the end of the key stage are still below the nationally expected level. Students can write at good length, re-telling a narrative accurately, but cannot readily use the technical language of literary criticism. They can quote aptly, and make effective comparisons between similar genres, for instance contrasting a story about Sherlock Holmes with another about a modern American detective. Speaking is developed through presentations given to the class. One class had to produce a booklet warning teenagers about the risks of getting involved in crime. Several of these were imaginatively word-processed, and students made good speeches about the quality of each other's booklets. Few students admit to reading as a leisure activity. Although students are making more progress through this key stage than they did at Key Stage 3, they enter Key Stage 4 with the handicap of low skills in literacy. Many could achieve higher standards and make more progress than they do.

108. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls reported at the end of Key Stages 3

and 4 are reflected in the quality of their work and learning seen during the inspection. Boys were less confident in their use of literacy at Key Stage 3, where few boys read with ease or enjoyment, and a greater proportion had only rudimentary writing skills. Girls were often more articulate than boys at this stage. At Key Stage 4, a similar pattern persists, though boys do begin to develop confidence, and with this an increasing competence, for example in their reading and speaking aloud. This improvement leads them to be less far behind the girls than nationally by the end of the key stage.

109. Standards in the two-year sixth form are below the level expected for the A level course. Students work hard. They know the texts and take detailed notes. Their essays are full of quotations, but these are not used to support an argument. The salient weakness is lack of structure in planning an essay, a failure to analyse what the writer is saying, and the devices used for saying it. Students speak little in class and so have little opportunity for arguing about books. Inadequate technical vocabulary and clumsy writing also hold students back. Because of these factors their achievement is less than it could be at this stage also, and progress is therefore unsatisfactory.

110. Teaching in lessons seen at Key Stages 3 and 4 was satisfactory overall, but has some unsatisfactory features. Teaching was unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers in all key stages plan well, have adequate knowledge of the material, and manage their classes with skill. Homework is set regularly, and used effectively. Marking is variable, but particularly good in the sixth form. In most lessons, the level of work and challenge are satisfactory. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on planning a short story, the teacher gave a very well prepared lesson with plenty of challenging things to do, for all levels of attainment. Students responded very well and made rapid, confident progress. However, some activities lack challenge. For example, students copy out passages, putting in the capital letters, or use a thesaurus without having to think how alternative words might alter the impact. At Key Stage 3, teachers do too little to improve students' key skills, particularly in reading and speaking. At Key Stage 4, the process of re-drafting a passage did not lead to a more imaginative final version. There is too little use of the library and computers. The chief weakness in this stage, in several lessons, lies in failing to give the students enough freedom to develop ideas for themselves. Students seldom argue with each other or ask questions. This was apparent in a Year 11 lesson on a poem from South Africa, and was the dominant problem in sixth form teaching.

111. Though students achieve less than they might, their learning is overall of satisfactory quality at Key Stages 3 and 4, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. In lessons, students are often keen to learn, and cooperate well with the teacher. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, students wrote with enthusiasm about Frankenstein's castle; they learnt well about writing in a particular genre because they were eager to join in, listened well and were keen to know what to do next. In other lessons, learning is satisfactory, although sometimes limited by the task, as for example in a Year 10 lesson on synonyms. Students knew what these were, and learnt well in the lesson, but did not have the chance to apply their knowledge in their own writing. Sixth formers do not learn well because teaching does not give them the chance to engage with the subject. For example, in a lesson examining an extract from *Hard Times*, students were obliged to read the text line by line, but were not given the help they needed to bring it to life and to debate its meaning among themselves. As a result of this approach, the degree of learning was limited by the task set.

112. The standard of management is unsatisfactory. Documentation, particularly in the departmental handbook and schemes of work, is not as helpful as it should be. Routines for assessment are inconsistent, and assessment data is not used to identify underachievers and set appropriate targets. Students are sometimes given books inappropriate for their abilities. The college now deploys 13 teachers for English, about half of them non-specialists.

Though several teachers teach only a few lessons each, this situation makes considerable demands on management, which it has not been able to meet. That said, the department plays an important part in the cultural life of the college, organising many visits to theatres, arranging poetry evenings, staging a major drama production every year. Further productions are put on at Christmas, often with local organisations. Through studying some well-chosen novels and poems students get an idea of how people from other cultures live.

113. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have remained at much the same level, well below nationally expected levels at Key Stage, 3 with some improvement at Key Stage 4, remaining above the college average but still below the national. Teaching has improved at Key Stage 3. The department now holds more constructive meetings, but still needs to address several long-standing concerns, chiefly in producing appropriate and helpful schemes of work, with a guide to assessment which can enable teachers to identify under-achievers and set targets for all. Students and parents should be told more clearly what standards have been reached and how to improve. Teachers need to expect more of students, setting more imaginative tasks, and allowing them more opportunity to learn from each other. They need to make literacy a high priority.

Literacy

114. Reflecting very low standards when students join the college, literacy is poor in all subjects across Key Stages 3 and 4. This weakness lowers standards across the subjects and denies students the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case with boys, though they begin to make more assured progress in literacy skills during Key Stage 4. The college is aware of the issue, which is a key issue for action in the present college development plan, but intentions for a literacy programme have not yet been realised. However, the college has run a very successful summer school in literacy for three years, and has gained much relevant expertise in its teaching.

115. The regular reading lessons in English set good habits, though some students complain of a narrow range of books in the library, and the library itself is underused. In other subjects, some aspects of good practice occur, but only from the initiative of a department rather than from a whole school policy. In mathematics, and design and technology, students can formulate hypotheses, using technical language confidently. Written presentation in mathematics is very good in the sixth form. The standard of writing required in science is only up to the nationally expected level among the top sets. Students in PE use technical vocabulary with ease, and in PSE they expound their ideas clearly. In modern foreign languages the standard of speaking improves as a result of good teaching; and all students are given extra reading sheets and records. However, in humanities subjects, standards of reading hold students back, and skills of speaking and listening are weak. Key words are displayed in only a few areas, including geography and technology. Students with SEN enter the college at a very low level, but make good progress in literacy, often markedly so.

MATHEMATICS

116. In 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, the average points score for mathematics was well below the national average for all schools and below that for similar schools. The proportion of students attaining level 6, whilst below the national average, was broadly in line with that of similar schools. The improvement since the previous inspection has not been at the same rate as seen nationally. During this period, the girls' performance has improved whilst the boys' has dropped below that of the girls. 1999 results were better than those for

English and similar to science. The provisional figures for 2000 show an improvement on the previous year.

117. In GCSE in 1999, standards were well below the national average for grades A*-C and, whilst being below those for 1998, were better than in 1997. Overall, girls' attainment is higher than boys'. In 1999, girls' mathematics results were better than most subjects including English and science. However, boys' results compare much less favourably. Year 11 top set students gain in confidence from taking GCSE intermediate in November. All 88 students entered since 1997 gained grades B or C with most improving when taking the June higher level paper. The proportion gaining A*-G grades in 1999 was above the national average and reflects an upward trend since the previous inspection.

118. At A level, entries are too small to make comparisons with national figures; however, from 1996 to 1999, 15 students were entered and 14 were successful. Three gained A and B grades.

119. Attainment on entry to the college is well below the national average, with many more being below average than is seen in the national average entry profile. The GCSE results indicate that many students achieve well in mathematics, making good progress across Key Stage 4.

120. Students' attainment at Key Stage 3 is usually well below national standards. However, by the end of the key stage, higher attaining Year 9 students can describe in words the rule for finding the next term of a number pattern and use algebra to state the general term in linear sequences. These students make very good progress during the year, as many find the concept of equivalent fractions difficult at the beginning of Year 9. Lower attaining students strengthen their number work at the beginning of Year 9 in a variety of ways, enabling them to tackle other attainment targets with greater confidence. For the first two years, students work at their own pace through an individualised mathematics scheme. However, the progress of students with SEN in Year 7, in particular, is adversely affected because provision of classroom support is insufficient. Record keeping needs further refinement to reduce pockets of underachievement in Year 8.

121. At Key Stage 4, attainment overall is below nationally expected levels. However, there are some instances where it is above. This is particularly evident within coursework, when, for example, students state hypotheses prior to comparing English texts from different sources. They collect sets of data and apply, with understanding, measures of spread, for example standard deviation, to formulate their conclusions. Lower attaining students are working industriously towards GCSE and can complete a probability space diagram to represent all outcomes and scores when rolling two dice. Their progress is good, emulating last year's students when those entered for GCSE gained at least a grade G, two gaining Ds. Students with SEN are working well within these sets. The policy of entering those with weak memory recall for the certificate of numeracy is appropriate.

122. The weaker attainment of boys at both key stages is seen also in their performance in class and in their written work. At Key Stage 3, girls were often seen to respond more quickly than boys, while boys were more hesitant in their grasp of numeracy. This difference continues at Key Stage 4, where boys do not achieve as much confidence in using and applying numerical skills as the girls.

123. In the sixth form, standards of work seen are almost in line with those expected in the A level course. Six students in Year 12, most of whom have GCSE grade C, are working hard with their teachers to overcome the transition from GCSE to advanced level work to meet the course expectations. They apply their knowledge of powers of numbers successfully, for

example, to calculate the growth of a bacteria colony. The two Year 13 students with successful modules behind them can apply their knowledge of trigonometry to calculate accurately forces acting upon objects on inclined planes.

124. Teaching overall is good, with one third being very good or better. As a result, students make at least as much progress as expected. Teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4. Here, the teachers' commitment, energy and enthusiasm are more evident when interacting with whole classes. The four established teachers have almost effortless control, their students are very well behaved, willing to participate and enjoy their teachers' sense of humour, which makes teaching and learning a partnership. Particularly effective are teaching strategies that build students' confidence by painting pictures with words, introducing new mathematics through Olympic events and using wall displays as learning resources. Teachers make good use of question and answer to establish students' levels of understanding. The opportunities for students to share their methods of calculating during mental mathematics sessions are particularly beneficial. Students gain also when teachers involve or share with them the planning of a series of lessons, enabling them to see lessons as a series of building blocks. Lessons for lower attaining Key Stage 4 students are planned well, as teachers give careful consideration to all the difficulties that their classes need to overcome. As the result of good teaching, students learn well. In most lessons, they show interest and work productively. For example, in a numeracy lesson in Year 8, students enjoyed the variety of activities, and the teacher's skill in changing topics just in time maintained their interest and engagement. Students' learning is adversely affected in lessons taken by teachers who have yet to gain the skills required to implement the Year 7 and Year 8 scheme. For example, in the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, a non-specialist teacher had not acquired confidence in teaching mental mathematics.

125. Good direction from the head of faculty is enabling the department to keep abreast of curriculum changes, particularly those in the sixth form. The strong commitment and teamwork of long-serving mathematics teachers are of real benefit to the students and newer staff. Assessment, whilst integrated into the Year 7 and 8 course, is not sufficiently rigorous or frequent in other years to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual students or of the teaching.

126. The faculty has made good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching is now good, the working environment is bright and more conducive to learning. The motivation of Key Stage 4 students is better and has led to the improvement in standards. With the arrival of new computers, work can begin on using them to enhance the teaching and learning of mathematics.

Numeracy

127. The mathematics faculty's recent introduction of numeracy sessions within Years 7 and Year 8 is improving students' facility for number. These sessions enable students to build upon their knowledge and understanding gained at primary schools. Across the curriculum, standards of numeracy are generally adequate to meet the demands of the units of work, though boys are sometimes held back more than girls by low levels of numeracy. Most students can arrive at the correct answers, despite not always knowing their tables. In PE, for example, students effectively use methods of calculation learnt in mathematics when doing fitness assessments. In modern foreign languages, number work is further re-enforced in Year 10. The use of computer-assisted learning programs enables students with SEN to estimate and judge the reasonableness of their solutions and check their methods. Students

collect and display information in geography and design and technology in a variety of accurate graphical styles.

128. Numeracy is not strong in all areas. For example, in geography students work slowly. Their analysis of data is reasonable, but their ability to make predictions is less developed.

SCIENCE

129. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above and the proportion reaching level 6 and above were well below the national average. These results are similar to those of last year but lower than those obtained in 1997. Results in science are similar to those in English and lower than those in mathematics. Levels of attainment are well below average in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. The unvalidated results for 2000 indicate an improvement.

130. In the 1999 GCSE examination in science (double award), the proportion of students awarded grades A* to C was lower than last year and below the national average. Three candidates were awarded grade A. The proportion of candidates awarded grades A* to G was in line with the national average. The performance of boys was similar to that of girls. Results are above average in comparison with similar schools. The unvalidated results for 2000 are similar to those for 1999.

131. The number of candidates entering A level subjects in science is too small to make significant comparisons. The expected range of grades has been obtained over the past four years. None of the candidates entering biology or physics in 1999 obtained the higher grades. The unvalidated results for 2000 show a marked improvement.

132. Observations of lessons and work seen during the inspection show that standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 are below average. Students enter the college with low levels of attainment and in Year 7 and Year 8 progress is necessarily slow. Achievement over the key stage is therefore no more than satisfactory, though the rate of progress improves in Year 9. Most students have a superficial knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the curriculum, but the highest attainers reach standards that approach and often exceed nationally expected levels. They know, for example, about enzymes and the digestive system and can set up and use simple electric circuits. The lowest attainers have difficulty understanding all but the most simple concepts. Practical skills at all levels are good. Students' standards of literacy are poor. This inhibits their understanding of a text and expressing themselves in writing. Although their command of spoken English is limited, students demonstrate a much better knowledge and understanding of science through speaking than by writing. By the end of Key Stage 3, students have made no more than the expected amount of progress, but at Key Stage 4 they do better, especially boys, exceeding the progress expected of them.

133. Most students achieve well and make good progress at Key Stage 4. Towards the end of the key stage the highest attainers have achieved a sound understanding of the science curriculum and reach levels equal to or above the national average. They know, for example, about total internal reflection in prisms and can carry out with competence investigations into the factors affecting the rate of chemical reactions. An able Year 11 group was observed carrying out an investigation relating ionic bonding to the decomposition of a variety of carbonates. Many students, however, have limited knowledge and standards remain below the national average.

134. In students' work and lessons seen at Key Stage 3, girls achieve more highly and

make better progress than boys, helped by more strongly developed skills in literacy and numeracy. However, boys make up lost ground at Key Stage 4, because they are gaining confidence in their ability to speak clearly and so to hypothesise, and thus to achieve more progress in practical work.

135. Many students in the sixth form produce work which is at least equal to nationally expected levels. They understand, for example, about cell structure and genetic engineering. A Year 12 group was observed using computers to look at a novel way of investigating images. They achieve satisfactory standards and progress at this stage.

136. The quality of teaching at all key stages is always satisfactory and in well over half the lessons observed it was good or very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, but these are not always shared with the students and teachers do not always take the opportunity to consolidate at the end of the lesson. Relationships with students are good and some teachers use humour to good effect. Students respond to praise and their self-esteem is raised. Students make good progress when they are presented with a variety of activities and are set short term goals. For example, after an informative introduction by the teacher, a Year 7 class discussed some pictures of safety hazards. They then devised their own safety rules and moved to a practical exercise on the correct and safe use of a Bunsen burner. They stayed on task throughout the lesson and both their knowledge and practical skills improved. Teachers are aware of the problems faced by low attaining students and those with special needs. Specially adapted material is well used to enhance their progress. The standard of behaviour is usually satisfactory and often good. Students work well together and in practical sessions are supportive of one another. Sixth form students are treated in a mature way and teachers share with them their enthusiasm for the subject.

137. Students respond well when they are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. A low attaining Year 11 class took responsibility for controlling the variables in a demonstration experiment on resistance. They approached the task with enthusiasm and their feeling of ownership of the lesson made a valuable contribution to their learning. Several lessons feature practical work, which is always carried out competently and safely. A Year 9 class carried out very competently an experiment to investigate the effect of amylase on starch. A Year 11 group was carrying out experiments which related the decomposition of metal carbonates to ionic bonding. In both these groups, the teacher moved round questioning students and providing constant challenge. Expectations were high and students had made very good progress by the end of the lesson.

138. No lessons seen were unsatisfactory overall, but in a few there was a lack of challenge. In these, the level of concentration and motivation was low, so that students made very slow progress. Generally, teachers mark books regularly, but there are insufficient statements to inform students what they did wrong and what they need to do to improve. The faculty has a sound assessment policy and keeps good records of student attainment. However, these are not used to set targets for students.

139. The faculty has many good features. Teachers work well together under the guidance of the head of faculty and are committed to raising standards. The faculty does not provide very much opportunity for sharing good practice. Teaching is ably supported by two laboratory technicians. Their work and that of teachers are made difficult by the fact that the laboratories are in two suites which are a long way from one another.

140. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in attainment at GCSE. Students are now more confident and learn better for themselves. However, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 remains well below the national average. In some lessons, students still

show a lack of motivation, and monitoring of the department needs further improvement

ART

141. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is below the nationally expected level, as expressed in the National Curriculum statement for the end of the key stage. Girls in general attain better standards than boys. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' results in GCSE examinations are well below the national average, girls gaining better examination grades than boys. GCSE classes contain a high percentage of students with SEN. In the most recent year overall grades A*-C gained were 22.5 per cent, girls gaining 26.9 per cent and boys 18.1 per cent. Grades have improved significantly in recent years from a low point of 6.3 per cent grades A*-C in 1996. In 1999, one student took A level, gaining a grade B. There are no A level students at present.

142. Students achieve well and make good progress in their learning at Key Stage 3. From a well below average level of general attainment on entry, they achieve a range of skills in art, a particular strength being drawing and painting from observation. In some instances, students are able to apply shading very successfully in the illustration of the three-dimensional structure of objects. They also show a good grasp of composition in, for example, their drawing from observation of plants. Colour is used intuitively rather than knowledgeably and their understanding of the way in which colour functions in art is limited. Though written work is below average, progress is good for these students in presentation, evident in their project work. Progress is satisfactory in the use of ICT, but the range of skill in this area is restricted to intermittent design work in one or two projects, rather than a sequential series of learning experiences. There is evidence of sound progress in three-dimensional ceramic work with well-constructed, inventive and colourfully glazed ware produced by students across the whole range of attainment. Students with special needs show good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Their drawing shows careful observation and is often expressive.

143. Progress through Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and, in the case of students with special needs, is better. Some students are able to produce work of high quality in projects involving drawing, and painting and design. Their work is well presented and gains good grades in GCSE examinations. Though students with special needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, the large number in the art option groups, in one instance 70 per cent of the group, reduces overall attainment in GCSE examinations. In general, students learn to pursue personal research in the development of their projects. Writing is not extensive but subject terms are analysed as they arise. As at Key Stage 3, progress in information technology is patchy.

144. In the course of their creative work at both key stages, students learn to co-operate in the use of materials and equipment and to take responsibility for their own work and to respect the work of others. At both stages, attainment and progress are higher for girls than for boys, reflecting the higher attainment of girls at the end of the key stages.

145. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory, with a significant percentage good or very good. Strengths in the teaching include thorough preparation - including preparation of the working environment and resources - an important factor in a practical subject, clear explanation of tasks, and sensitive individual help and tuition. The pace of lessons is good and promotes good pace in learning. The quality of individual supervision has a marked impact upon the learning of students with special needs. Work is planned to allow success at a full range of levels of student attainment, helped by the individual nature of the tasks in this subject. A comparative weakness in some of the teaching, however, is a tendency to set tasks which

are difficult for a large proportion of the class, for example drawing requiring very searching and mature observation. Assessment is regular and thorough, reflecting whole-college policy. A relative shortcoming is the failure to use assessment as a means of checking the extent to which prior knowledge gained in earlier years has been retained and consolidated.

146. The subject is competently managed within the faculty of design and technology by an art specialist who makes a full contribution to the teaching in the department. Relationships between staff are good with effective co-operation and shared aims. Documentation is succinct and clear with detailed schemes of work. The accommodation provided is of good quality, roomy and well lit. The furnishings and equipment are maintained in very good order. Storage is good and materials are carefully husbanded. The provision of consumable materials is adequate for existing courses. There are good display areas but these are not used effectively as a learning resource with exemplars of stages in the development of ongoing ideas. Students' performance is under constant review and staff meet to discuss developments in the curriculum. Problems of under-achievement, in particular, have been resolved and changes introduced to meet criticisms made at the time of the last inspection. There is no evidence of benefit to art from its integration within the design and technology area. There are no shared courses in, for example, textiles or graphics to forge curricular links.

147. Student progress is aided by good behaviour in most lessons. Students concentrate well and are able to sustain their efforts throughout lessons. They co-operate well in the sharing of materials and equipment and show interest in their work.

148. The measures taken since the last inspection have been successful in addressing under-achievement at Key Stage 3, where achievement is now good rather than unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has also improved, being good overall rather than sound. These changes constitute satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

149. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, seen in assessments made by teachers in recent years, are below the national average level, with boys further behind than girls. In 1999, the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A*-C was also below the national average. Results in the resistant materials course showed a significant improvement, but the textiles and food results were lower than in 1998. Results overall in 1999 were lower than in the previous year but those for 2000 are significantly higher, with a further improvement in resistant materials and a significant improvement in textiles. At the pass grades A*-G in 1999, results were in line with the national average and are at similar levels in 2000. The proportion of girls achieving grades A*-C is higher than that of boys. There were no A level design and technology entries in 1999 but in 2000 all students achieved pass grades. In A level home economics, results in 1999 were well below the national average.

150. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is below the standards expected nationally. However, this represents good achievement and progress, as students join the college with levels of attainment that are well below average. Middle and higher attaining students have satisfactory making skills in a range of materials and their graphical skills are equally well developed and near to nationally expected levels. For example, in a Year 9 graphics lesson, students demonstrated good pencil control and line quality whilst interpreting and exploring a range of plan views and elevations. Subject knowledge and the technical vocabulary which underpins it are below nationally expected levels for the majority of students. The girls' design skills are generally at a higher level than the boys'. For lower attaining students and those with special educational needs, practical making skills are better developed than other aspects of the subject.

151. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are below the level expected nationally but this still represents good achievement and progress for these students. In the work seen during the inspection, levels of attainment are continuing to rise in all the courses offered. Girls have higher attainment than the boys, particularly in designing. Making skills are satisfactory on all the courses. Higher attaining students have a secure subject knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson, students were able to recognise the different needs of a range of users and take into account these conflicting demands when exploring potential solutions to their design problem. For lower attaining students and those with SEN, practical making skills continue to be better developed than other aspects of the subject. Attainment in the A level design and technology course is in line with national expectations as students have at least satisfactory skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of the course.

152. Throughout the college, students handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing accuracy and skill, and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. Graphical communication skills progress well over time and students use an increasing range of drawing and projection methods to model and record their design ideas. All higher attaining students and middle attaining girls undertake research, analyse, draw up specifications and evaluate with increasing depth and rigour. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make at least satisfactory and often good progress in relation to their prior attainment, especially with making.

153. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and in the sixth form, very good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. In a significant majority of the lessons observed, teachers used effective strategies and learning activities which were appropriate for students of all levels of attainment. For example, in a Year 8 food lesson on rice as a staple food, the teacher used a range of strategies including explanation, questioning, students recording information, students reading from well prepared teacher produced resources, and the tasting of rice products. Such approaches ensure that students work hard and show high levels of interest in the tasks presented to them, leading to a high pace of learning with good productivity in lessons. Teachers give good individual support to the students, often including accurate and informed feedback which makes an impression on the students and encourages them to value their efforts, and raises their level of motivation. In some lessons the teachers shared the aims of the lesson with the students, so they were aware of what they should achieve by the end, but this was not a consistent practice. Rarely did the teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson with the students, or set timed targets for the completion of intermediate tasks, and this contributed to a loss of pace in the learning in some lessons. Teachers have consistently high expectations of the students' work and behaviour and the majority of the students have positive attitudes to their work. Routines are well established and classroom organisation and management are usually good. However, the only instance of unsatisfactory teaching was due to poor management and control of the students.

154. The department is very well led and managed. Teachers are working well together as a team to raise further the attainment of the students. There is effective and ongoing review of the curriculum, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. ICT is integrated into the schemes of work. The curriculum is strengthened and made relevant by the number and range of industrial links at both key stages and in the sixth form. However, lack of time at Key Stage 3 reduces progress. Large teaching groups also have an impact on the type of teaching approaches which the teachers can adopt. The assessment system is effective, manageable and well understood by the students. It includes targets for improvement which enhance students' learning.

155. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. Students' attainment has been significantly improved at GCSE and the quality of teaching is consistently good. Design skills are still weaker overall than making skills, particularly for boys, but the staff are continuing to work at this issue, with some success. Some of the accommodation is still in need of refurbishment, particularly the textiles and food rooms.

GEOGRAPHY

156. Assessments made by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 confirm attainment well below the nationally expected level, for both boys and girls. Recent GCSE A*-C grades results have improved, although they are still below the national average. Very few students attain the higher grades, but there is also improvement here. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the college, geography results have been close to the average. Recent A*-G results have been broadly in line with the national position. The subject is a popular option with boys at Key Stage 4, and they perform better than girls when compared with the national position in this subject. Recent A level results vary but are generally below the national average.

157. When they enter the college, students' attainment in geography is well below the national average. Standards improve over time, but the levels reached are still well below the national average by the end of Key Stage 3 and below by the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, students have a basic grounding in geographical skills, and knowledge of key words is sound. Most can use and interpret maps but need practice in the construction and analyses of graphical representation of statistical data earlier in the course. Students' knowledge of spatial issues needs developing. Progress overall at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, although in some classes high attainers are not stretched and some low attainers also underachieve. Students with special needs, when provided with learning support, make very good progress.

158. At both stages, progress in improving the skills of literacy is slow. Literacy skills are very weak at Key Stage 3 and a major encumbrance to learning, though numeracy skills are satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 4, progress in geography is generally good and for some students very good. Students can explain a range of physical and human processes well, for example river management and demographic transition models. Many can also apply a variety of geographical skills competently to their independent study project work. However, students are still held back by their low attainment in literacy, so that standards reached do not yet approach the national average. Despite this handicap, boys make rather better progress than girls over this key stage. A coherent programme of ICT skills is also needed, suitably linked to curriculum themes to ensure progress in ICT over both key stages.

159. Teaching is good overall, and as a consequence students learn well. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and often good, while at Key Stage 4 it is mainly good and very good. Teachers are very supportive and manage and control students well. The best teaching has clear and manageable aims, shared with students and tested at the end of the lesson to ensure that learning is effective; detailed and imaginative planning which encourages interest and offers a variety of suitable learning opportunities; dynamic and lively presentation with good pace, challenge and high expectations. In these lessons staff have a secure knowledge of the subject matter taught and teaching is well structured and focussed. This helps students' understanding and thus promotes good learning. Visual aids are used, including video extracts and photographs, as, for example, in one lesson explaining the processes producing High Force waterfall in the river Tees. In another lesson, the overhead projection of graphs and diagrams of population pyramids was used to compare countries at different stages of development. Such aids clarified lesson aims and had a significant positive impact on the quality of students' learning. Students' attitudes are mostly very

positive and many display a real interest in their work and respond productively to teaching. However, in a few lessons, some students were easily distracted, wasted time and there was a resultant low work rate leading to underachievement. Behaviour with the exception of these occasions was always good. Good relationships are established with teachers. Students' individual responses to questions are good, being often well developed and analytical, but in many lessons a greater class response needs nurturing.

160. Though their teaching is already at least satisfactory, teachers do not always reinforce the main teaching points on the board or use a standing display map to develop students' understanding of geographical patterns and place. The needs of low attainers are not always well considered when selecting materials and activities for lessons. The involvement of students in evaluating their own work and setting targets would be beneficial. The lack of fieldwork locally and further afield at both key stages is a serious deficiency.

161. The management of the department is satisfactory. Teachers are well matched to the demands of their subject, resources are generally adequate and teachers share a commitment to improve standards of attainment. Areas for further improvement include documentation, which is limited, and the need for a more detailed operational plan which is annually evaluated. There is currently no monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teaching on students' learning and standard of performance at external examinations.

162. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department has successfully worked on improving standards of attainment in examinations, for example by developing study and examination skills. However, some concerns raised at the previous inspection have not been adequately resolved.

HISTORY

163. Teachers' assessment of the students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average for most students, though a minority achieves average levels, with a small number achieving above average. Girls attain rather higher levels than boys at this stage. Over the last two years, the number of GCSE passes at grades A*-C has remained at 23 per cent, which is well below the national average. Boys and girls perform equally well over Key Stage 4, boys making up lost ground so that here is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls in GCSE. As an alternative to GCSE, some lower achieving students also enter for certificate of achievement examinations, which have been introduced since the previous inspection. There are currently no students taking history in the sixth form.

164. At both stages, students' achieve well for their abilities and make good progress, with rather more progress by boys at Key Stage 4. They are positive in their attitudes to work, behave well in lessons and get the most from their learning. For example, in a very successful lesson in Year 9 on twentieth century events, students made good progress in understanding the Cuban missile crisis as a result of very good teaching and the opportunity to work to a clear brief in pairs. In a Year 11 lesson on Arkwright's Mill at Cromford, students achieved well because they understood the significance of the subject and had plenty of support and direction from the teacher. They achieved better in this lesson than in another seen in Year 10, when students were less convinced about the significance of their topic on the Plains Indians.

165. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, teachers know their students' abilities and make good use of debate to reinforce earlier learning and introduce new concepts. In Year 7, for example, where many students have poor literacy skills and an uncertain grasp of chronology, skilful use of questions directs the students towards an understanding of the origins of Rome and the difference between myth

and legend. Good management of lessons encourages the students, who work hard to meet the teachers' high but realistic challenges. Lessons are well planned and often fun. For example, in Year 8, the students participate in role-play to portray mediaeval social ranks, which consolidates the knowledge of all ability levels. By the end of Key Stage 3, the students develop a clear understanding of the causes of World War 1. In the best lessons, role-play is used well to demonstrate national alliances and the students recognise the differences between kingdoms and republics.

166. At Key Stage 4, teachers supervise the completion of students' assignments well, and students learn well from the practical nature of these projects. For example, in their study of aspects of the industrial revolution, students visit a local mill to obtain primary source material. The teachers' skilled question and answer sessions encourage students to share thoughts on their observations, for example, on water-wheel pits and watercourses, and they debate the importance of the mill's location. Their work on the holocaust shows a good understanding of Jewish culture and the rise of Nazism. There is evidence of independent, extended research by some higher achieving students.

167. At both key stages, the teachers actively promote literacy skills by encouraging vocabulary development, reading and presentation skills. However, in-class support for the students with special needs is limited, and their needs are not always met in lesson planning. The students' work is constructively marked, but there are inconsistencies in monitoring their progress over time. At Key Stage 3, students' attainment is not matched to National Curriculum targets and this reduces the objectivity of teachers' assessment.

168. The provision for and organisation of history have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. The college has restructured its curriculum and now offers humanities as a core subject, with history as a separate option at Key Stage 4. Policy documentation and schemes of work are good, and well prepared modules ensure a consistency of approach. However, although staff training is ongoing, modern technology is insufficiently used to support the subject. The department is well led, and previously reported staffing difficulties have been resolved with an increased number of specialist teachers. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. However, the implementation of assessment procedures is still underdeveloped, as is the use of modern technology to support learning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

169. In 1999, in the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, the proportion of students achieving the expected level was below the national average. Girls performed better than boys, reflecting their higher levels of attainment across the key stage. Over the three years 1997 to 1999, results in these teacher assessments have improved significantly. In 1999 the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations was well below the national average. There has been a significant improvement in these results for the year 2000. However, boys' performance in GCSE has been declining over the last three years, while that of girls has been rising. For both boys and girls, the proportion achieving A*-G was above the national average. These results are as high as they should be, taking into account students' prior attainment. However, students performed less well than in other subjects. Most sixth form students following the GNVQ course have obtained qualifications in recent years.

170. In the work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below those expected at the age of 14. Students enter the college with standards well below those expected. For example, in Year 7, students were seen being introduced to the college's computer system. Many of the students did not appear confident in the use of the keyboards or the mouse.

Standards improve considerably by the time students reach Year 9, where many students are beginning to achieve the expected levels. Students are able to use WORDART to produce posters for display, understand about different fonts and are able to resize objects on the screen.

171. Standards in the work seen for students in Year 11 following the GCSE course show levels of attainment not far below those expected. They are able to use WORD to produce a questionnaire and understand about using different software to produce a presentation. The standards of other students cannot be reported on as they do not receive any specific lessons, nor are they given enough opportunity in other subjects to improve their standards. Standards in the sixth form GNVQ key skills course are below nationally expected levels. Though most students are able to enter data into a spreadsheet and produce appropriate graphs, few have a good understanding of how to use the program to do calculations.

172. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Students are achieving well and making good progress at Key Stage 3. Students enter the college with levels of attainment well below those expected. By the end of the key stage attainment levels, although still below those expected, have improved considerably for most students. The long break between modules of work, however, restricts the progress students make. Many forget what they have done when they do the subject in following years. During the time when they are having lessons, students consolidate learning well and good attention is given to improving skills. All teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain skills in using the software clearly. Objectives are clearly explained for each lesson. Groups are managed well when students are required to share computers and teachers emphasise the need for students to cooperate with each other. Lessons are well planned with good links made between lessons to extend students' learning. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend learning and to prepare for lessons. In some lessons, however, some students did not have as much time working on the computers as others did. Lessons are usually conducted at a good pace and the time is used effectively. Teachers question students well to find out what they know, understand and remember about the work covered. Marking of students' work is good, with helpful comments given about how to improve

173. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory for students following the GCSE course. Students usually achieve expected results in line with their prior attainment, girls achieving more progress than boys. The progress of other students, however, is unsatisfactory. These students are not given many opportunities to improve their skills on a regular basis. There are no specific lessons for them in the subject and there are very few opportunities given in subjects to use computers. In Year 12, students following GNVQ courses are making satisfactory progress with using computers to present information.

174. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Few opportunities are provided in most subjects to use the skills being developed in the ICT lessons. ICT is not recognised in the schemes of work of many subjects. There is good practice taking place, or planned to take place in some subjects, for example in design and technology, modern foreign languages and science, but at the moment ICT does not appear as a regular feature in the work of most subjects. No assessment is yet taking place in subjects.

175. The subject is well led and managed for the taught courses and at Key Stage 3. A clear direction is provided and there is a commitment to raising standards. Schemes of work for Key Stage 3 are good and reflect the revised National Curriculum. A weakness in the organisation is the long gap between series of lessons created by the inclusion of the subject in the technology area. Statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4. Apart from students following GCSE courses, the majority of students receive few opportunities to develop their skills. Opportunities are not provided to ensure that the ICT requirements of the

National Curriculum are met for all students. In addition, the progress of these students is not reported to parents.

176. Some improvements have been made since the last inspection. There is more balance in what is taught and better use is made of an improved range of hardware. Standards in GCSE are improving at present. However, some weaknesses have not been sufficiently improved. There remains a lack of use of ICT in the planning of many subjects and the assessment arrangements still do not include an input from other subjects. Overall, therefore, improvement has been unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

177. In 1999, GCSE results in French were in line with national averages, and in Spanish they were well above, although the number of students in these full two-year GCSE courses was relatively low. However, students performed significantly better in languages than in the other subjects they took. In 2000, provisional results show that the performance in French was broadly similar. In Spanish, results dipped, but this may not be significant because of the low number of students involved. Since the last inspection, the results in French have worsened slightly. The difference between boys' and girls' results is wider than is the case nationally, with girls achieving above average percentages compared with girls nationally at grades A*-C in French in 1999, and boys well below the boys' national figure. Girls attained far higher results than boys in GCSE in 2000. These contrasts were also seen in the relative performance of boys and girls during the inspection.

178. At the time of the last inspection, no students took A level modern languages. Low numbers of students have taken French and Spanish since then. In 1999, the two students taking French did not pass and in 1998 one student gained an E grade.

179. In lessons and other work, the standards reached by the oldest students at Key Stage 3 are below nationally expected levels. These standards are broadly similar to the 1999 teacher assessments; they were higher than those in 1998, which were seriously affected by long-term teacher absences. Students' achievement, given their general attainment on entry, is satisfactory and in a small number of classes with exceptional teaching, it is good. French is the first foreign language for all students; a small number of higher and middle attainers take Spanish in Years 8 and 9. In Year 9, the majority of students listen carefully to their teachers and can usually understand what is being said. A significant number of students require much repetition and further support from their teachers, and have more difficulty in listening to tapes. Many students are quite hesitant in speaking the foreign language, but when they are given the consistent practice and encouragement they need, they gain confidence and develop good accents. Lower attainers respond well to such methodical teaching. All students respond well when reading material is carefully presented, but many are put off by longer passages that are not immediately familiar. A few higher-attaining students write letters and accounts of some length and can recognise and use the past and future tenses to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum. In general, though, most students are limited to a narrow range of writing tasks, which they tackle with varying standards of accuracy.

180. At Key Stage 4, students' attainment in lessons and other work is also below nationally expected levels. In Year 11, relatively low numbers have opted for the full GCSE course in French and Spanish, and achieve appropriately. The majority take the certificate of achievement course during one period a week. The middle attainers on this course do not achieve their full potential. In Year 10, a change in curricular provision enables all students to achieve satisfactorily. Higher-attaining students take GCSE Spanish and all other students take a GCSE modular course in French, except a very small number of the lowest attainers

who work towards an appropriate certificate of achievement. In both Spanish and French, the higher and most of the middle attainers develop their speaking and listening skills well. Many respond well to the challenge of more extended reading passages and writing tasks, but they find accuracy in written grammar work difficult to achieve. A significant number of middle and lower-attaining students on the modular course appreciate the consolidation of much of the work they have encountered during Key Stage 3, and the presentation of new tasks to accomplish, such as the making of a tape about themselves.

181. At both key stages, students make satisfactory progress overall and, in cases where the teaching is of high quality, good progress. Students of all abilities achieve more than expected with such teaching. Most students with SEN achieve as well as others in the class, since teachers are well aware of their difficulties. There is, however, very little extra support for them from classroom assistants. Over both stages, girls make more assured progress than boys and achieve at least as well as might be expected. Boys make rather less progress than could be expected.

182. In the sixth form, standards are in line with expectations for the course. The one student takes part well in conversations and expresses his ideas and opinions with confidence. His written work has improved in accuracy.

183. The overall quality of teaching is good. More than half the lessons seen were good or very good and a few were excellent. Just over a quarter were satisfactory. One lesson was unsatisfactory because of the non-specialist's inadequate knowledge and use of the foreign language. Most teachers use the language well to ensure real development of listening and speaking skills, but a few do not consistently use it for classroom instructions or the introduction of new key vocabulary. Teachers plan their lessons well to cover most aspects of the subject in each lesson and are aware of the differing attainment levels in each group. They use a wide variety of teaching methods, and demonstrate, in some cases, real expertise with the overhead projector. In one lesson of Year 10 lower attainers, the teacher used several transparencies with overlays to present, examine and understand food menus, and then acted out with students how to take orders and report them to the chef. Most teachers' expectations of what students can learn are high. The department has devised and uses excellent progress sheets to help students in the assessment of their own learning, to show how far they have got and to set their own targets. A few students with special educational needs, in spite of the teachers' careful consideration of their difficulties, require extra support.

184. Responding well to good teaching, students learn well at Key Stage 3 and to a satisfactory level at Key Stage 4. Generally, they are keen to learn and to improve their performance. Behaviour is good or very good in nearly all lessons. The head of faculty gives a very good lead as to the standards of behaviour expected in the classroom and supports other teachers well in this context. A small minority of students are not keen on languages and do not settle quickly enough to the task in hand. Students appreciate the clarity and organisation of the extra support materials, which are designed to raise standards of learning at every stage. A few students who go to extra night-school classes in French and Spanish show real commitment and enthusiasm.

185. The head of faculty ensures an excellent, clear direction for the work and development of the department. Assessment and recording procedures are very good, as are the revised schemes of work; these features contribute very well to the effective monitoring and evaluation of students' performance. The formal monitoring of teaching by the senior management team and within the department is under-developed.

186. Since the last inspection, the teaching, assessment and monitoring procedures have improved. GCSE results in French have declined, but over time the ability profile of the students involved has reduced. Overall, improvement has been good.

MUSIC

187. When this inspection took place, the head of department had been absent for two terms. The National Curriculum for music had been suspended because of staffing difficulties, but is to be reintroduced on the appointment of a new head of department. As a result there were no Key Stage 3 assessments last year. There has been no GCSE course in recent years. During the inspection, lessons were being taken by a specialist supply teacher who had been in the college for two weeks.

188. Attainment in classes in the lessons seen at Key Stage 3 is below nationally expected levels. Students have an uncertain knowledge of the basic elements of music and little experience of composing. However, younger students enjoy singing unison songs, attaining average standards in this activity. Because of the limited curriculum, achievement is unsatisfactory and progress limited. Students achieve low standards and could achieve far more, with continuity of well-informed teaching.

189. The standard of music teaching is poor at Key Stage 3. The consequent standard of learning is poor also, as students are, for much of the time, not actively involved in learning, and what learning they achieve is not being tested or reinforced by the teacher. Some lessons are based around one listening activity designed to test musical ability, with some singing at the end. There is little teaching content in these lessons. In other lessons, students are given historical background to music, but are not encouraged to relate to the music in terms that they could understand. The quality of singing is energetic and students are developing a repertoire of songs. However, students are not encouraged to warm up their voices or develop techniques such as breathing. The use of time and resources is unsatisfactory, as is knowledge of the current curriculum in music, so that teaching methods are quite restricted in range. Homework is set as and when necessary.

190. At Key Stage 3, attitudes are generally poor. Most students in Year 7 and 8 classes listen to instructions and follow them. However, in some lessons, students distract each other; this was particularly noticeable in Year 9 lessons, where students talked during a teacher's presentation. Behaviour is unsatisfactory, but the relationship of students to staff is basically courteous.

191. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory, in the absence of a head of department. Resources are insufficient. There are some pitched and unpitched percussion instruments, in poor condition, and some keyboards kept in a storeroom outside the classroom. Accommodation is inadequate. The music classroom is cramped, movement in the room is difficult and there are no facilities for group work. The practice room is situated in a different part of the college. There is no provision for ICT teaching in music.

192. In this difficult situation, the college has made successful efforts to stimulate and sustain students' involvement in music making, through the Kirkby Family of Schools Music Project. This is an ambitious and worthwhile venture, the fruit of much negotiation and planning. It confirms the college's intention to advance music making and culture in the community and in all its schools. In the absence of a permanent music teacher the college has successfully encouraged students to take part in events such as the college talent show and presentation evening. Within school, however, the subject's current contribution to students' cultural development is limited, though some extra-curricular activities take place. A small group of instrumental teachers offer lessons in woodwind, brass and strings.

193. Since the last inspection, progress has been unsatisfactory, although schemes of work now exist. In addition, assessment provision is now undertaken for Year 7 and all students at Key Stage 3 are guaranteed one music lesson a week. However, links between assessment and teaching are still unclear and procedures do not exist for monitoring students' progress through the curriculum. There has been no lasting progress in management or standards, because of the difficult staffing position.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

194. Standards in physical education are in line with nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. A significant number of students achieve standards that are higher than those expected at both stages. In comparison to similar schools nationally, standards at both key stages are high. The 1999 GCSE results were well below the national average, though the trend in GCSE results over recent years has fluctuated from in line to well below national averages. Students who take the GCSE PE examination consistently do well in comparison to other subjects in the college and to similar schools nationally.

195. In lessons seen, standards were higher than those expected for these students. Attainment levels in girls' basketball and netball were high because of their understanding of court positioning and attacking and defending responsibilities. Older boys had good advanced technical skills in hockey, especially using reverse sticks to attack defenders. A feature of the work in the department is the continual improvement most students make as they pass through the college. They learn well at all stages. A considerable number of students improve their performances further by attending the wide range of curriculum activities available and by playing in inter-form and inter-school competitions.

196. Achievement is good across both key stages. This is mainly due to the positive responses of students, high teaching standards and very good continuity in the curriculum. Students in present Year 11 GCSE groups are achieving higher standards than recent results suggest. In volleyball they make good progress in their capacity to analyse and apply their skills. Their written work is satisfactory and they make good progress in their ability to research and apply theory to practice. The Year 12 A level group makes good progress in their understanding of what happens to their bodies physiologically in warm-up activities. The majority of students can transfer skills and understanding from one game to another, using good spatial awareness. They retain learning well. For example, in Year 9 dance classes, they used previously learnt aspects of a movement phrase to improve their use of gesture in a gang fight sequence. Less able students have their special needs recognised in teachers' planning and make good progress because they share these clearly stated learning objectives.

197. Standards of teaching are good, often very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Very good subject knowledge is adapted by teachers to improve students' application of a wide range of skills and techniques. However, boys are not always expected to use this expertise to develop their tactical thinking and performance in games. All teachers have high expectations of student behaviour and group collaboration. Their enthusiasm and encouragement for students to do better have resulted in very positive responses and the willingness of most students to improve. The encouraging levels of feedback to boys in low ability badminton and football lessons produced high endeavours and improved standards considerably. The department has made very good progress in maintaining and further raising standards of personal development through physical education. In many lessons, teachers use a variety of ways to extend students' thinking. Tasks require students to plan and apply themselves in games contexts and to analyse their own and others' performance. For example, in a dance lesson, girls used stimulus from the *West Side Story* theme and

developed a group phrase based on a combination of gesture and travelling components. In basketball and netball, girls increase understanding by planning their own group practices based on teachers' clear learning objectives of the lesson. These features of learning are more successfully used in girls' lessons. Planning is an improving feature of the teachers' work, with expectations clearly identified for a range of abilities. Teachers are beginning to use previously assessed performances and experiences to influence the next stage of their students' learning.

198. The department is well led and has a clear vision of its role in advancing students' learning, through PE and in the school. Many students have said how much they enjoy PE, in which they want to excel. The enthusiasm of teachers and the training they provide have resulted in knowledgeable and committed teams who strive for continual improvement. The recent improvement in schemes of work and lesson planning, which shares appropriate objectives with students, has created both focus and procedures for raising standards. However, the lack of appropriate National Curriculum objectives and levels and accompanying target setting is restricting progress in both the common Key Stage 4 and GCSE programmes. To achieve its future long-term aims, the department needs stronger links with whole school development plans. Issues related to procedures for assessment, monitoring of teachers' effectiveness and the teaching of literacy are not clearly defined within the present line management system.

199. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. The introduction of racket sports is a good example of both the improvement of the choice and balance of activity students receive, and of raised standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

200. The measure of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is no longer based on GCSE in religious studies, which was taken by only a few students in 1996. All students at Key Stage 4 now study RE within the humanities course and large numbers are entered for GCSE in this subject. In 2000, 33 per cent of the 101 who were entered achieved grades A-C and almost all gained grades A-G. Results have been around this level in recent years, though they were considerably higher in 1998. Girls achieve better results than boys, reflecting the situation nationally. Within RE lessons at Key Stage 4, students attain appropriately for their abilities. They remain most at ease with the factual but do show that they are able to understand sufficiently to produce their own notes while watching a video on the life of Jewish communities in Europe before the outbreak of anti-Semitism.

201. Students' attainment on entering the college is well below the nationally expected level. In their first weeks in Year 7, a significant number were unable to name a major world religion. However, towards the end of Key Stage 3, their attainment has improved to a level below that expected nationally. Their written work shows a basic factual knowledge about a range of world religions and displays an understanding, for example, of parables and the resurrection. They are able to write about issues in life relevant to their experiences, for example, through problem pages, and begin to see that there may be a religious dimension in the debate. Year 9 students are encouraged to use the Internet responsibly and to research web sites, for example to discover arguments for and against abortion. This is very good practice for them, as few are yet confident enough to argue a response in depth, either orally or in written work. Students make satisfactory progress in the skill of listening - one Year 9 class worked well in groups and listened carefully to each other's viewpoint.

202. Students achieve satisfactory standards for their abilities, at both stages. However, achievement, especially at Key Stage 3, is hindered by students' limited ability to express their knowledge in extended writing or sustained discussion. Bearing in mind the limitations

this imposes, students make good progress in relation to their previous levels of attainment, over both stages. For example, by the end of Key Stage 3, students are able to write a diary about factual areas of the syllabus such as Holy Week and also consider deeper issues such as resurrection through discussion about the Turin Shroud.

203. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers prepare lessons well and have a good command of the subject. They use an appropriate range of teaching styles, such as class and group teaching, discussion topics and work sheets together with audio-visual aids. Some lessons are held in the faculty's information technology room, so that information on wide-ranging issues, including world faiths and issues of life, can be consulted. Teachers appreciate the need to give individual help to those with SEN. Provision for the less able and for the gifted is explicit in new schemes of work and seen in practice within lessons. Responding to good teaching, students learn well, at both stages.

204. Teaching is to the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus. In Years 8 and 9 there is insufficient time allocated to religious education because roughly half the time is given over to personal and social education. This means that the syllabus cannot be covered in the width or depth expected. Religious education in Years 12/13 is within the society, arts and science modules of general studies. There is no detailed documentation to show content, width or depth to ascertain whether this meets the Agreed Syllabus.

205. The subject is very well managed. The teacher in charge is a non-specialist but has a good grasp of the subject. She and others in the department are gradually revising schemes of work and producing innovative and challenging lesson plans. These enable a team of seven teachers to teach with confidence and provide work for students of all abilities. Homework is set regularly and marking of work is consistent. This enables staff to monitor progress efficiently and to help students set targets for improvement. Relationships of staff with students are good and discipline is based on respect and good humour. However, there remain examples of poor behaviour. Some, especially at Key Stage 3, results from immaturity. Some, higher in the college, is disaffection with both the subject and education in general.

206. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and there have been further improvements in the quality of teaching and management. However, time allocation for the subject remains a problem in Years 8 and 9, and there is no direct evidence of the width or depth of religious education within the general studies programme in Years 12 and 13.