

INSPECTION REPORT

ULLSWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Penrith

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112393

Principal: D A Robinson

Reporting inspector: W S Walton
1210

Dates of inspection: 9 – 13 October 2000

Inspection number: 223829

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
College address:	Wetheriggs Lane Penrith Cumbria
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	G Walker
Date of previous inspection:	22 January 1996

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23480 M J Harding	Team inspector	History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The college is larger than most comprehensive schools and although its overall size has not changed significantly since the last inspection the number of Post 16 students has increased by a third. It has a very large rural catchment area of about 500 square miles around the market town of Penrith and receives students from 27 primary schools. The college is in an area of low unemployment but the proportions of parents with higher education qualifications and of students from high social class backgrounds are close to national averages. The proportion of students taking free school meals is well below the national average but this is not a true indication of eligibility for free school meals. The percentage of students taking free school meals in surrounding primary schools is double that of the college and the proportion of Post 16 students claiming maintenance grants is much higher than the free school meals take up by students aged 11 – 16 years. The college receives students across the full attainment range but its catchment area is shared with the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School which takes about 35% of students from the catchment area each year. The college is the regional centre for students with severe learning difficulties and the proportion of students with statements of special education need (SEN) is three times greater than the national average. As a consequence of the last two factors, a high proportion of students enter the college with attainment which is below the national average. Overall the attainment of students on entry to the college is below the national average. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 1990 the staying on rate was the lowest in Cumbria; in 1999 almost 80% of 16 year olds remained in full time education and training in an area with many employment opportunities for young people.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

The standard of achievement, quality of teaching, leadership and management make this a very effective college which has made considerable progress in recent years. Its commitment to the continual improvement of teaching and learning and the development of a broad, balanced curriculum to meet individual needs indicates that it will improve even further. The college provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- Students make good progress and achieve well.
- Standards of attainment by Post 16 students are high.
- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the college is very good.
- The attitudes of students to work, their social values and their relationships with peers and staff are very good.
- The leadership of the college is extremely effective in pursuing its goals.
- Provision for students with severe learning difficulties is very good.
- Provision for the welfare and guidance of students is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very strong.
- Relationships with parents are excellent.
- There are very effective links with the community including surrounding primary schools.

What could be improved

- The time and provision of specialist teaching for religious education (RE).
- The staffing cover for modern foreign languages.
- The educational resources and accommodation in some areas.
- The performance of boys in some subjects.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in January 1996. Since that time standards in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved in line with the national trend. Standards in the GCSE examinations have improved at a much faster rate. At the last inspection the Sixth Form was newly established with very few students. It has grown substantially, offers a broad curriculum to meet a wide range of interest and need, and students attain standards in A Level examinations which are better than national averages.

Overall standards of teaching have improved. 80% of teaching is now at least good and teaching to Year 8 is no longer an area of comparative weakness. Concerns about some aspects of teaching in modern foreign languages and geography have been successfully addressed.

The curriculum is much broader and closely matched to the needs of all students, particularly Post 16 students. The growth in Post 16 curriculum has developed alongside links with the community to provide sound support for the emerging pre-vocational courses as well as improving opportunities for community service. There has been considerable investment in resources and in-service training for ICT although it is not yet fully integrated into the work of all departments. Provision for religious education has improved, particularly at Key Stage 3 but the college continues not to meet the statutory requirement for the teaching of the subject at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. The college has not been able to meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. More time has been given for the teaching of music so that National Curriculum requirements can be met. The workload of senior staff is high but operational routines work well and the identification and treatment of developmental issues are more effective than at the last inspection. Annual development planning is now on a firm basis. Monitoring the work of the college and evaluating the success of policies and practices is strong and much more secure than before.

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	C	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	B	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Overall standards in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science are close to national averages and have improved in line with the national trend over the last three years. Levels of attainment on entry to the college are below national averages and, therefore, achievements at the end of Key Stage 3 are good but the standards reached are below those of schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

Standards in the GCSE examinations have improved at a much faster rate than the national trend over the last three years. The average points score per student has improved from below to above the national average. In 1999 the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at the highest grades A*-C was in line with the national average. The good progress made in Key Stage 3 is maintained in Key Stage 4 and the achievements of students are good. The attainments of students in the GCSE examinations are close to those of schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

In 1995 only four students were entered for A Levels. By 1999 the number had increased to 67 and the average points score per student in the examinations was better than the national average. Because of the low number of entries of students in some subjects it would be unreliable to compare the college's results with national figures but in all subjects with more than ten entries in 1999 the average points scores were better than national averages. Results in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in 1999 were very strong – all students entered for the qualification were successful.

Standards observed during the inspection were mostly consistent with an improving school in which students make good progress. Standards in several subjects, for example English, mathematics, history and art were better than examination results suggest. However, insufficient time and specialist teaching at Key Stage 4 is given to RE so that standards suffer. The quality of work of some students in modern languages is affected at the present time by the absence of specialist teaching.

By the end of Key Stage 4 the overall standards attained by girls are better than those of boys. In the GCSE examinations in 1999 and in the last three years the difference between them has been greater than the national difference although the standards attained by both have improved in recent years. There is little difference in standards of work of boys and girls in business studies and history but the gap is significant in English, science, geography and examination physical education (PE).

In 2000 the results obtained by the college in GCSE exceeded its targets based upon the students' earlier work and their performance in standard tests. The college has set targets for 2001 for GCSE which are very challenging.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Students enjoy the college, work hard and involve themselves enthusiastically in the opportunities offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good, often exemplary in lessons. There is little bullying. The college deals effectively with the few incidents which occur. Students behave considerably around the college.
Personal development and relationships	Students mature perceptibly as they pass through the college. Senior students are personally and socially responsible. Students show initiative in becoming involved in charitable and community work. Relationships among students and with adults are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and levels of unauthorised absence are low compared with national averages.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
244 Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The overall standard of teaching and learning in each key stage is very good. Students respond well to enthusiastic, challenging teaching in a friendly, supportive atmosphere. Unsatisfactory teaching is rare and there is no poor teaching. Teaching is at least good in over 80 per cent of lessons and at least very good in more than 40 per cent. There are no subject areas in which teaching is weak. The majority of

teaching in English, mathematics and science is good and much is very good. Basic skills are well taught in English and mathematics and in some other subjects but the college needs a more co-ordinated approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Overall standards of learning reflect standards of teaching. Standards of learning for some students, in modern languages are affected, however by the absence of specialist staff. Similarly there is a need for more specialist teaching in religious education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is rich, broad, balanced and relevant, although provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 does not meet statutory requirements. Provision for information and communication technology has developed considerably in recent years but is not, as yet, firmly embedded in all areas of the curriculum. The time allocated to science at Key Stage 4 is below the national norm. There is a strong careers and guidance programme and excellent opportunities are provided by the broad extra-curricular timetable. Overall, the curriculum is particularly effective in meeting the needs of all students.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Provision for students with severe learning difficulties is exceptional in the richness of curriculum and the consistent quality of support and guidance. The inclusive policies of the college are most effective. Students with special needs make good progress in mainstream and in special groups although progress is hampered by insufficient support in some practical work.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The excellent relationships between staff and students, the high level of mutual respect, the confidence and trust staff place in students and the good examples provided by staff contribute to the very strong provision for personal development. Moral, social and cultural development is well provided for through the content and teaching/learning processes of many subjects including personal and social education. Provision for the spiritual dimension, though satisfactory, is less in evidence than other areas of personal development.
How well the college cares for its students	Overall standards of care, knowledge of students, monitoring of performance, quality of support and guidance are very good. The arrangements for monitoring attendance are very good. The college makes excellent provision for promoting good behaviour and eliminating anti-social behaviour. Consequently students feel very secure and valued.

The college has forged a very strong partnership with the great majority of its parents. Parents are appreciative of the values of the college and its influence on students. Parents co-operate well by helping with college work, through the Ullswater College Association (UCA) and by maintaining lines of communication. They are kept well informed of college events. Reports on students' progress are thorough and provide opportunity for parents and students to express their views. There are good arrangements to meet parents to inform them of progress and educational opportunities. The college operates an open door policy.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	The Principal provides very strong leadership with a clear sense of vision which is shared with staff. He is supported by a very effective, hard working senior team, at present understaffed, and progressive middle management. Arrangements for the creation, monitoring and implementation of development plans are good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the college and relationships with the management of the college are very good. They play a very influential role in the development of educational and financial policy. There are effective arrangements for monitoring the work of the college and for ensuring statutory responsibilities are met excepting provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 and a daily act of collective worship.
The college's evaluation of its performance	The college has very good arrangements for gathering information which is used effectively for evaluation and development at whole college level. Examination performance is measured against realistic targets and carefully evaluated. Development and financial plans are monitored regularly and reviewed annually. The progress of individual students is well monitored and progress reviewed with tutors.
The strategic use of resources	Staff are well qualified and well deployed. There is a current shortage of staff in religious education and long term absences in modern languages and art. Accommodation is generally adequate and much improved in recent years but there is some shortage of specialist accommodation. Priority has been given to financing staffing resources, a consequence is that the overall quality and quantity of learning resources is inadequate, particularly text books in some subjects. Quantity, quality and use of ICT is much improved. There is very good use of the resource centre.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college expects students to work hard. The quality of teaching. Students make good progress. The college is well led and managed. The range of extra-curricular activities. Parents feel comfortable approaching the college. The college helps students become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of work students do at home. The information they receive about students' progress. The work with parents.

The return of questionnaires from parents and the attendance at the meeting with the registered inspector were high. The great majority of parents were pleased with all aspects of the work of the college. Inspectors share their positive views. A minority of parents express some dissatisfaction with homework but there is no consensus among them about what the requirement should be. There is some evidence from students that homework is not always set according to the timetable but generally they feel that the homework requirement is appropriate, manageable and worthwhile. Inspectors endorse that view. The concern that some parents have for the strength of their partnership with the college and the information they receive should shortly be resolved. The recently revised arrangements for tutor/parent meetings and interim reports should keep parents fully informed and encourage their co-

operation in the learning process.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

1. Academic standards have improved since the last inspection. Improvements at the end of Key Stage 3 in the core subjects as measured by national tests have been in line with the national trend. Standards in the GCSE examinations measured by the average points score per students have improved at a much better rate than the national trend. Post 16 work was just beginning at the time of the last inspection; it is now very well established and standards are better than national averages.

2. Overall standards in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and over the previous three years have been close to national averages. In the core subjects they were close to national averages in English, mathematics and, in 1999, in science. Overall performance in science over the years 1996 to 1999 was below the national average. In 2000 results improved significantly in science, they were also better in mathematics but down slightly in English. The proportion of students attaining the national benchmark standard in 1999 was close to national averages in each of the core subjects. The proportion reaching a higher standard was better than the national average in English and close to it in mathematics and science. Teachers' assessments of standards against national criteria showed that attainments were better than national averages in DT and PE, close to them in geography, modern foreign languages, art and music and below them in history and ICT. Teacher assessments in 2000 showed higher standards in ICT and music, unchanged in PE, art, modern foreign languages, history and DT, and lower in geography.

3. In 1999 in GCSE the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at the highest grades A*-C was close to the national average, whereas in earlier years it was below the national average. The average points score per student for 1999 was better than the national average compared with earlier years when it was below average. The proportion of students attaining passes at grades A*-C was close to the national averages in English, mathematics and science and all students obtained passes in these subjects. The college had good results in PE and food technology. Standards in business studies and office applications have improved in recent years and are better than national averages in the proportions of A*-C passes. In most other subjects it did not do so well compared with national standards in the higher grades, but did much better when compared with overall pass rates.

4. The college now has flourishing Post 16 provision. In 1995 only four students were entered for A Level examinations. The number had grown to 67 by 1999 and the standards attained (measured by the average points score per student) were better than the national averages. The average score for students entered in each of art, biology, English, mathematics and general studies were better than national averages. These subjects all attracted more than ten entries. Seventeen students were entered for GNVQ at the Advanced Level in either Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism or Business. All students passed either with distinction or with merit.

5. The average level of attainment of students on entry to the college, as measured by standard tests is below national averages. Students make strong progress and their achievements at the end of Key Stage 3 are good although the standards attained are not as high as those in schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 4 and at the end of Year 11 standards of attainment are in line with those of similar schools. Progress made by students with special

needs in mainstream classes is usually good and those withdrawn for additional support significantly improve their literacy skills. The college has individual records of progress of students following special programmes, but it should maintain composite records for evaluative purposes. Students with profound learning difficulties make very good progress.

6. Standards observed during the inspection indicate that this is an organisation committed to improving teaching and learning. In several subjects, for example English, mathematics, history and art standards were higher than indicated by examination results. Standards in art were noteworthy given the current staffing problems of the department. Staffing difficulties contributed to low standards, however, in some modern language groups which did not have enough specialist teaching and in RE where lack of specialist teaching together with insufficient curriculum time results in inadequate knowledge and experience. Standards observed in PE at all key stages were above national averages. The extra curricular programme enables many students to attain high standards in team and individual sports. Several teams do well in county competitions and many individuals gain representative honours. Standards are above average at Key Stage 3 in music and extra-curricular work by choral and orchestral groups and soloists reach high standards. Standards are below average in GCSE work in ICT although in business studies and office applications ICT shows a good level of attainment across a range of applications. Standards are above average in DT at Key Stage 3 and Post 16 and very good in food technology at Key Stage 4.

7. Average scores in end of Key Stage 3 tests in recent years show that girls do better than boys in English, mathematics and science and that the gap in performance is a little greater than nationally. Although attainment of boys and girls has improved in recent years in GCSE examinations the gap between them is greater than at the end of Key Stage 3 and wider than nationally. It is more marked in some subjects than in others; for example there is little difference between boys and girls in business studies and in observed work in history but it is marked in English, science, geography and examination PE.

8. In 2000 the college exceeded its targets for GCSE performance which were realistically based on results in standard tests and knowledge of the students. The targets for 2001 are very challenging.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The great majority of students enjoy coming to the college and participate fully in the curricular and extra-curricular opportunities it offers. Students respond very well in lessons. They arrive at lessons promptly and prepared to work. They quickly settle, maintain concentration and work productively. Students are very good listeners. They work well individually, in pairs and in small groups. In general studies and in drama they participate readily and responsibly in role play. Behaviour in many lessons, for example in music and modern foreign languages is exemplary. Students are courteous, respectful and considerate of their peers and adults. Behaviour is never bad but it does fall below the usual very high standards if students are not clear about what they should be doing or if the work lacks challenge and pace. Students are proud of their work and their achievements which feature strongly in the displays around the college. They use the facilities of the college very responsibly and have good regard for safe practice in laboratories, workshops and PE. Behaviour is good around the college. Students conduct themselves sensibly in the circulation areas at break-times and their behaviour in the long break at lunch-time is noteworthy. Students have the full run of the college and fully justify the trust placed in them. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism. There were more short-term exclusions last

year than in the year preceding the previous inspection. This is attributed to a small number of students in their final year of compulsory education who did not respond to the college's behaviour code. The incidence of short-term exclusions is not excessive compared with national averages and permanent exclusions are rare. There is some bullying but it is not a significant problem in the college and students are confident that if it is reported it will be dealt with effectively. Levels of attendance last year and in recent years have been close to the national average but levels of unauthorised absence are much lower than national averages. Punctuality is good.

10. Students mature perceptibly as they pass through the college. By the time they leave the great majority are independent learners with a well-developed sense of personal and social responsibility. Senior students are heavily involved in community and charity work, often taking the initiative in the development of ventures. The support for a school in Nepal, children in Romania, the senior citizens' luncheon club, the work of the school council and the involvement in Young Enterprise are a few of many examples of students taking responsibility for their involvement with the wider community. Students with severe learning difficulties thrive in the inclusive atmosphere of the college. There is a very strong sense of equal opportunity in the college – all students are valued equally and all are challenged to do their best. Students with severe learning difficulties respond especially well to the rigorous expectations the college has of them. They grow in confidence in an atmosphere which is secure, caring and demanding. They work hard to achieve their individual potential and make significant progress in the skills of independent living.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. Standards of teaching are high and have improved since the last inspection. Over 40 per cent of teaching is very good or better and more than 80 per cent is at least good. Unsatisfactory teaching is rare. The quality of teaching is consistently high in all three key stages. The proportion of very good teaching at Post 16 is particularly noteworthy. Standards of teaching in Year 8, where most of the ineffective teaching was found at the last inspection, match those in the other years of Key Stages 3 and 4. Previous concerns in individual subjects, for example in modern foreign languages and geography, have been addressed successfully. Teaching standards in all subjects are at least satisfactory and in all National Curriculum subjects and RE the majority of teaching is at least good.

12. Standards of teaching are very closely related to standards of learning. Teachers have high expectations of students and they share a common belief in the ability of students to do well. Success and effort are celebrated. Teachers and students are proud of the achievements of the college in recent years but there is no complacency, rather a will and confidence to do better. Students like the college, feel comfortable and secure, want to succeed and expect to work hard. The atmosphere in classrooms is very conducive of good learning.

13. In almost all areas teachers have good knowledge and experience of their subjects. In RE, however, there is a need for more subject specialists. In some areas of modern languages the learning of some students is adversely affected by the absence of specialist teachers although in art some cover of long-term absences is provided by visiting artists with very strong knowledge of their areas of work. Teachers of music are good practitioners and modern language teachers are proficient speakers of their respective languages.

14. The teaching of basic skills is always satisfactory and is strong in history, geography and DT but the college would benefit from a more co-ordinated approach to the development of numeracy and literacy. Improved resources and in-service training have improved the use

made by many teachers of ICT as a tool for learning. Teaching of basic literacy to small groups withdrawn from mainstream lessons is strong. Teachers respond accurately to the individual needs of students. Students want to do well and work purposefully in these sessions. Teachers vary their teaching styles to maintain the motivation of students and time is very well used.

15. Much of the teaching of students with severe learning difficulties is of a very high standard. The work of teachers and support assistants is very well co-ordinated. Lessons are extremely well prepared and resourced. An excellent English lesson drew upon a range of visual and sound effects, supporting the voice of the teacher to create an atmosphere in which a range of stimuli were harnessed to support learning. All staff present in the lesson played important supporting roles. The objectives of lessons seek to meet a wide range of individual needs – cognitive, behavioural and physical. Staff are very sensitive to physical and behavioural changes and their effect upon the students' attitudes and abilities for learning.

16. Most lessons are carefully and effectively planned with good regard for the differing needs of students. Different work, on the same theme, was used to stimulate interest in different groups within the same year in English. Lessons are well planned in music with good use of resources but more computers are needed for greater sophistication of composition work, especially in Key Stage 3. Imaginative planning to make use of a wide variety of methods and resources is a feature of modern language teaching. Good planning is a particularly notable factor in art given the current reorganisation of teaching groups and the use of visiting artists. Students arrive promptly for lessons and are well prepared for work. Teachers make lesson objectives clear at the outset and lessons get off to a brisk start. Very occasionally, however, the objectives are not clear to students, as was the case in a lesson with a low attaining mathematics group in Key Stage 3. On this occasion it took some time to recover the situation even though the work was a continuation from the previous lesson. Good planning with appropriate consideration of the needs of students allows lessons to proceed at a good pace and students to work productively. Students are well organised, they work effectively individually, in teams and in groups. Their motivation and interest is well maintained by varied and effective styles of teaching. Involvement of students through question and answer sessions is widely and effectively used. Teachers successfully challenge students to justify their answers and extend their thinking. Challenging and thought provoking discussion is a feature of RE teaching and question and answer sessions are well used in mathematics. A very lively French lesson with a group of students with severe learning difficulties maintained a very good pace throughout. Almost all students were continuously involved in the oral work. They were pleased to have the opportunity to demonstrate their language skills and good learning took place. Most teachers of modern languages make very good use of the target language and students become comfortable in hearing and using it. Occasionally, when there is too much reliance on English students are less confident in the use of the foreign language. Video and TV are well used to illustrate learning points in many subjects. Video material and role-play encourage students to think critically and facilitate their understanding of complex issues in general studies and sociology. Teachers often use the experiences of students to bring greater relevance to learning. The approach is successfully employed in the examination courses in PE. There is good integration of fieldwork in Post 16 geography and child-care students draw on their work experience. Case studies and work based scenarios are helpfully employed by GNVQ teachers.

17. Standards of classroom management are almost always very good. Typically, in English, students respect very clear parameters of behaviour and relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and friendly. They inspire confidence and imagination. Students are given lots of positive support through praise and

encouragement. Students have a good understanding of how well they are doing through oral feedback, marking and assessment. On-going assessment is regular and well recorded. It is well used in mathematics and is very thorough in English. In DT and PE on-going assessment is regularly supported by self-assessment. Assessment arrangements are stronger in music than they were at the last inspection but more opportunities are needed for students to reflect on their own work. In art there is well-targeted regular assessment, especially of Post 16 students. Homework is set and marked regularly. Students see it as valuable and manageable. In most cases the response to homework is at least satisfactory although some Key Stage 3 students of art do not take a conscientious approach to it.

18. Teaching approaches in business studies have been successful in eliminating the gap between the performance of boys and girls in the GCSE examinations. Overall in the college the gap between girls' and boys' attainments at the end of Key Stage 4 is greater than the national gap – boys do not do as well as girls in some subjects.

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

19. The college has constructive and well-planned links with the feeder primary schools. Arrangements for transfer are exemplary and the college continues to report to primary colleagues about the academic and social achievements of former students. Transfer of data is good, helping the college provide individual support to maintain the learning process. The college offers a rich, broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which is very effective in meeting the needs of students across the range of age and ability. There is good continuity and progression through the key stages. In almost all cases time spent in lessons meets national guidelines. There is compliance with National Curriculum and statutory requirements in most subjects. The college has provided more time for Key Stage 3 music and improved the delivery of information technology, thus addressing successfully two of the key issues noted in the last inspection report. The delivery of ICT is still uneven across the subjects, but there is a very significant contribution to skill development by the business studies department. The previously reported issues relating to religious education are still unresolved. In Key Stage 4, the time provided within the modular personal and social education programme is totally inadequate to allow students to meet the agreed syllabus objectives. There is no realistic provision for RE in the Post 16 curriculum. Consequently, the statutory requirements of the Cumbria Agreed Syllabus for RE are still not being met. The development of literacy and numeracy varies across subject areas and although it is not unsatisfactory and is sometimes good, further co-ordination would ensure consistent application of best practice across the curriculum.

20. There are specific concerns relating to the delivery of science, modern foreign languages, art and Post 16 general studies. The time allocated to double award science in Key Stage 4 is below national norm, affecting progress and standards of attainment. In languages, staff absence since the start of term means that there are a number of classes in Key Stages 3 and 4 that have either very restricted or no direct language tuition. This is unsatisfactory for all concerned, particularly for those on their final approach to the GCSE examination. Similarly, Post 16 students preparing for the A Level general studies examination, have reduced and uneven timetable contact because of long-term staff absence. Post 16 art students have five single periods of taught time per week. The lack of double sessions inhibits the development of practical work. In Key Stage 3, the time allocation for art makes it difficult to meet the requirements of the syllabus.

21. Despite these concerns, the richness of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 continues to have a positive impact on the overall quality of learning and standards of attainment, with value added at each stage. The improved equality of access and opportunity afforded by the combined use of the Certificate of Achievement and GCSE programmes, is a positive feature that is not fully reflected in published comparisons with national examination statistics. The Post 16 curriculum is equally comprehensive, offering an enviable choice of academic and vocational courses for all levels of ability. There is also the opportunity to study for the International Baccalaureate but changes in the content and structure of A Level programmes make the cost effective timetabling of this provision very difficult to maintain.

22. The delivery of this curriculum in the context of a secure, challenging ethos provides good support to individuals. The college has been very successful in providing for the learning needs of individuals and this is central to its educational philosophy. The structure and organisation of provision for special needs students is very good, promoting good levels of learning across subjects. The support and guidance of those who have severe learning difficulties is exemplary. The special unit is extremely welcoming, is very much at the heart of college activities and is a model of social inclusion.

23. The curriculum offered for students with severe learning problems is of an exceptional quality. It responds entirely to National Curriculum expectations and is sufficiently differentiated to enable all students to follow fulfilling progressive courses in all subjects. The curriculum is equally strong in its social and behavioural objectives which are specific to individual students. In Key Stage 4 and beyond the curriculum becomes increasingly tuned towards independent living and the achievement of basic skills. Good provision is made for other students with special needs mainly within the mainstream curriculum. Students have individual programmes and their needs are mainly met through the setting arrangements. Some students are withdrawn from lessons for individual or small groupwork to focus on improvement in literacy. These arrangements work well but the concentration of support on withdrawal groups does mean that some students are insufficiently supported in mainstream classes, for example for practical work in science. Students who have difficulty in coping with the demands of a full GCSE programme at Key Stage 4 have the opportunity to opt for time in which they receive additional support with Key Stage 4 work. The organisation of this support, which is much appreciated by students, requires further development to achieve its full potential.

24. A well-documented personal and social education programme operates in all key stages, enabling the college to meet all other statutory requirements. This includes appropriate health and sex education, attention to the consequences of drug misuse, development of personal and social awareness and responsibilities of citizenship, preparation for work experience, enhancement of study skills, coping with stress, decision making and problem solving. The recent introduction of extension studies to complement the existing PSE programme, has doubled the time allocated to this aspect and is clear evidence of the college's commitment to the stated aim of educating the 'whole' person. There are good teaching schemes backed by suitable resources. The quality of the teaching varies. It is usually satisfactory, often good and occasionally very good. A review of procedures for checking the effectiveness of the taught programme and ensuring consistency is required. The college should consider including the co-ordinator as a member of the teaching team.

25. The careers education and guidance programme is very good and develops well through the later key stages. An effective partnership with Cumbria Careers provides advice, individual interviews, group-work sessions, and some individual casework. There is a well

organised Careers Library and very good relationships with local employers. Year 10 work experience is well organised and the integrated work placements and work shadowing arrangements for some Post 16 students promote very good standards in the vocational programmes. The Post 16 advice and support provided by the head of Post 16 and the college leadership team gives very effective support to those progressing into higher education or employment. The programme is valued by the students and their parents and receives strong practical support from local businesses.

26. The college has significantly improved its provision for the spiritual dimension but it is not as strong as arrangements for personal, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is provided mainly through the PSE programme and the work of the currently hard-pressed RE department. It is implicit in many aspects of the curriculum. The twice-weekly assemblies, which include very effective contributions from local church ministers, engage students and provoke personal reflection. On other days however, the morning registration session is usually not organised to provide spiritual opportunity. Consequently, the college still does not meet the requirement for daily collective worship.

27. The previous report valued the college's commitment to moral, social and cultural development, referring to exceptional provision, clear values and a strong moral framework. This pleasing state of affairs continues. The Courtesy and Consideration code reflects the principles that distinguish right from wrong. Staff lead by example with the result that honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice are fostered not only in assemblies and PSE but also through the range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.

28. There is a real sense of community within and about the college that underpins a powerful and vibrant development of social education. This is evident in a shared commitment to charitable work, the integration of students based in the learning support unit, collaborative work in lessons, work of older students with younger in paired reading schemes and other support ventures, links with feeder schools and the wider community. The college is very much at the heart of the community and the students are encouraged to show initiative and take responsibility. The fortnightly luncheon club for senior citizens run by the learning support unit, the lorry load of supplies to Romania and the work of the college council are only three examples from many.

29. Students gain an insight of their own cultural traditions especially in English, the creative arts and history. This insight is enriched by college visits and contacts with visitors. The college increasingly provides for the promotion of knowledge, understanding and recognition of the multi-cultural reality of life in Britain. There are active and diverse strategies to foster an awareness of other cultures in the humanities, food technology, the arts and modern foreign languages. The foreign exchange programmes, corridor and classroom displays, international links and charitable work, all contribute to the shared sense of pride, to the impact of the college in the local community, and to the healthy atmosphere which pervades it.

30. A significant strength is the very wide range of extra curricular activities, extending personal interests and providing additional academic challenge. Music, sport, clubs, visits, links with Nepal, community service, outdoor activities, drama, environmental education, European awareness activities and local business partnerships all provide stimulating opportunities. The longer lunch-time exists to encourage student participation because opportunities to join in after college are limited by the constraints of college transport. Large

numbers of students participate and they and their parents endorse the value of these activities. Some students cite them as an important factor when deciding to stay in Post 16 education at the college.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

31. The quality of care and support provided for students of all ages and ability is very good. This confirms the view of nearly all parents who speak very highly of the help and support their sons and daughters receive. Parents are very impressed with the way in which students gain in confidence and maturity during their time at the college, attributing this to the pastoral care and academic support they receive. All staff show a strong commitment and concern for the welfare of students and for their progress and achievements. Throughout the college very good procedures are consistently followed to monitor and support academic performance and personal and social development. There are very strong and positive relationships between staff and students who know each other very well. Many staff know students' families and are often well acquainted with their family situations. Form tutors and heads of year respond very well to the needs of all students as individuals and very good provision is made for their physical, emotional and intellectual welfare. Very good careers support is available to students in Key Stage 4, through a programme which includes very well organised work experience and placements. The college has a strong programme of personal and social education which provides students with very good confidence building experience.

32. Procedures for monitoring child protection issues are very good. There is a designated member of staff who takes overall responsibility. All staff are familiar with procedures and a number of them have attended recent training courses. Students giving cause for concern are identified quickly and sympathetically and issues are well documented and recorded. The college has very good liaison with a wide variety of outside support agencies who are readily accessible and provide very good support. A regular meeting of the Medics Agency consisting of senior staff and outside agencies is held each month to discuss any concerns about individual students and to ensure immediate and appropriate action is taken. Although organised on an informal basis, a learning support assistant who is also a trained student friend/counsellor is readily available for supportive discussion, and his services are very well used and valued by students and staff alike. The health and safety policy is well implemented with constant monitoring and risk assessment of the site. Staff pay good attention to health and safety issues when working with students during lessons in the science laboratories.

33. The College has adopted very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Absences are well recorded and followed up by form tutors, heads of year and deputy principal. Parents are contacted quickly in the event of unauthorised absence. Through the very good support systems the college monitors and promotes student attendance on an individual basis and those with an unsatisfactory record receive good additional personal guidance and encouragement to improve.

34. There are excellent procedures in place to monitor and promote good behaviour and the consistent implementation of these and the high expectations of staff are visible in all areas of the college. Excellent procedures are also followed to deal with any bullying or oppressive behaviour. A small number of examples were seen of teachers' prompt

disciplinary response to name calling or inappropriate behaviour. Students know what is expected of them and they are confident that any incidents will be handled well by staff.

35. The college has excellent arrangements to support the induction programme as Year 6 students leave their primary schools and prepare to join Year 7 at the college. Many Year 6 students face the potentially difficult experience of moving from a very small rural primary school into a community college on a large campus. This is very well recognised by the college and handled very thoughtfully. The principal visits all primary schools to meet the new intake and every student is given a very attractive and informative induction prospectus. The teacher responsible for primary liaison works closely with the large number of primary schools to ensure the smooth transfer of relevant information and records. Very good attention is paid to continuity and progression. A number of visits to the college for parents and their sons and daughters are organised as well as the opportunity for Year 6 students to take part in a number of activities. During the first term form tutors, head of Year 7 and the principal provide an exceptional programme of 'settling in' support and very quickly come to know all the new students as individuals. This level of care has a very positive and constructive effect on students' attitude and the progress they make, and ensures that most settle very quickly into secondary education. Students with special needs receive excellent support and are exceptionally well integrated into all areas of the life of the college. All have well-structured individual education plans which are kept up-to-date by regular review and assessment. Parents speak very highly of the help and support provided for students with specific medical problems.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. The partnership with parents is excellent, and the help and support that parents readily give to the work of the college is exceptional. The college is committed to its open-door policy and the encouragement that it gives to parents to be involved with it makes a strong contribution to students' progress and achievements. The college works hard to help parents understand what is being taught and how they can assist their sons and daughters with their studies. Most parents whole-heartedly agree that the college works closely with them, and they appreciate the quality of education provided. The importance which is placed on ensuring that parents know form tutors and heads of year results in most parents feeling willing to approach staff with queries or concerns, and confident that issues will be handled promptly and appropriately. Parents of students with special needs are fully involved in their individual education plans and are invited to attend all review and assessment meetings.

37. A significant number of parents and grandparents provide valuable help such as assisting in the library, Reading Together Scheme, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, sports and musical activities. The vast majority of parents have signed a home/college contract and assist teachers by signing homework diaries which many of them also use as a means of communication between college and home. The diary is put to especially good use by parents and teachers of students who have severe learning difficulties. Owing to the community status of the college and the central role it plays in the Penrith area, many parents are regular visitors to the site to attend Adult Education courses which often overlap with the college courses. In addition, regular working groups are held on site where whole families are encouraged to take part in a variety of learning activities. This has a very positive effect on the college's aims for students of all ages to work closely together and share in learning.

38. The Ullswater College Association (UCA) is a very thriving and supportive group of parents, grandparents and friends who organise many social, educational and fund-raising activities from which the college benefits. All parents are well informed about events by

the UCA newsletter sent to them every half-term.

39. The quality of information for parents is excellent. Regular open evenings and review meetings are held for each year group when parents and students have the opportunity to talk to teachers and to set individual targets. For example, parents of students entering Year 7 attend induction meetings and a review meeting in November of the first term, as part of the settling in process. Parents and Year 9 students attend an open evening to discuss options followed by a review meeting after only two weeks into Year 10. The induction brochure, prospectus, sixth form brochure are of high quality and contain very useful and relevant information. Parents receive regular college newsletters and UCA newsletters which contain very good information about activities and students' successes. Lists of homework and assignments are posted to parents of students in Year 10 and Year 11, and these contain very comprehensive information to enrol parental help.

40. The annual record of achievement meets the statutory requirements and provides parents with very good information about progress, achievement and target setting. The style of report is personalised and very pertinent to the individual student. Students write an assessment of their report and parents are invited to add their own observations. Interim progress reviews for students in Year 7, Year 10 and sixth form are sent to parents mid-way through the year. Students in the learning support unit receive the same record of achievement and the college has the excellent practice of using photographs in the report to illustrate the progress made.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

41. The college continues to have strong and effective leadership based on very clear and frequently re-affirmed principles. There is a mission to provide high quality education, tailored to individual needs, which also places the college at the heart of the local community. Academic success is important but it is set in the context of the needs of the whole person. This has been the basis for the development of a challenging and innovative curriculum that encourages students, provides choice and creates opportunities for many in the local community. The principal has been very successful in promoting his vision with the staff of the college and there is a shared endeavour to make it a reality. The principal leads by example, working hard to achieve his declared aims and objectives. He is proud of the prestige and status the college now enjoys.

42. The college has a strong leadership team, currently understaffed, with a deputy and assistant principal who play a very active role in making and executing the policies of the College. They have clear views and objectives and sometimes feel frustrated when these are curtailed by limited resources. Each member of the leadership team has a number of overlapping responsibilities which ensures a broad grasp of college issues and provides continuity in the event of illness or long term absence. The workload is high but the operational routines work well and the identification of developmental issues is effective. Development planning is now on a firm basis. There is an annual plan, with priorities and specified implementation strategies, usually developed and agreed through working parties of the staff. The college priorities are clearly stated and promoted amongst staff as a whole. Responsibilities for implementation are agreed with pastoral and departmental managers. Some of the priorities reflect departmental concerns. In turn, many departmental plans focus on implementation of the college priorities in specific aspects of the curriculum. The college has a successful team approach. Teams of staff develop and suggest strategies to promote and manage the academic and pastoral work of the college. This approach has done a great deal to give a sense of common ownership of the policies and most staff are working

together to achieve the objectives. There are clear lines of management with associated accountability. This is usually expected and accepted at all levels. In general, the delegation to and contribution of staff with management responsibilities, is very good.

43. The governors play a strong role in shaping the direction of the college, challenging the principal and his colleagues to justify their developmental proposals. All governors have attachments to college departments. Presentations by heads of departments and heads of year keep them informed. They also target broader educational issues on a theme of their choice, on an annual training day. Consequently, they have a clear appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They support and promote its activities in the local community and some contribute to the teaching and learning programme. This is particularly the case with vocational education where considerable help has aided the development of the business studies programme and the provision of work placements and work shadowing experience for the students. The chair of finance works closely with the principal, who is currently carrying out the bursar's role, to check the accuracy of the budget and to recommend deployment of resources. In carrying out this role. The professional expertise of some governors is extremely valuable. Although the system works, there is still some uncertainty amongst staff about the formulae and principles used to decide budget allocations, particularly for departmental resources and other projects. A more transparent system is required.

44. Subject leaders exercise delegated responsibility effectively within a defined framework. The academic and pastoral work of the college is supported by effective monitoring of student learning that produces a range of data to aid evaluation of teaching and learning strategies for groups and individuals. The recently extended system of tutor/parent meetings, predicted grades, individual discussions with students three times a year, whole college review days and heads of year monitoring the impact of learning, are indicative of the drive to establish a culture in which students take a much more active part in their learning. The form tutor is the main home /college link with the intention of involving parents directly in this process. The approach is new and has many resource implications. The system has considerable potential and is backed by appropriate staff training.

45. Well-qualified teachers are deployed effectively to deliver the agreed curriculum. They are generally committed and hardworking. The skills of support staff are used well and their contribution is greatly valued. Overall, there is a reasonable balance between established, experienced teachers and newer entrants to the profession, although staff turnover is not as great as in many other schools. Support for new staff and newly qualified teachers is very good and they are helped by clear documentation on college procedures and constructive guidance from heads of departments and members of the leadership group. The staff benefit from a strong programme of college based in-service training that targets the college priorities for development. The current 'Leadership for Powerful Learning' facilitates the monitoring and evaluation strategies of the college and is designed to give middle managers the skills and confidence to carry out their assigned role. The principal places great emphasis on teacher performance and on celebrating the success of his colleagues. A refined version of a 1998 pilot scheme applying these principles has been developed and this is intended as the basis for appraisal and professional review. The performance management plan requires that a member of the senior team will observe the teaching of every member of staff. Written and oral feedback will be given. In addition the principal carries out annual reviews of all staff.

46. In some areas however, standards are affected adversely by the long-term absence of teachers. The current absence of a specialist teacher in modern foreign languages, leaves groups without appropriate support and guidance. RE has no permanent head of department. A newly qualified teacher does most of the teaching with non-specialists from other

departments taking other classes. RE is not the priority for these non-specialists and this affects student perceptions. Split classes in Years 7 and 8 in science impede the continuity of learning. In Key Stage 4, science has relatively large classes. Combined with having less teaching time for the dual award than the national norm, this is having an impact on standards. The designated co-ordinator for ICT is the deputy principal who has many other pressing responsibilities. The art department does not have a permanent leader. Although temporary staff are experienced and skilled and the college has benefited from teaching support by local artists, the uncertainty and lack of consistent leadership has an effect.

47. Much of the college's accommodation has been refurbished since the last report. It is now well maintained and brightly painted. There are new facilities such as the theatre seating for the Cumberland Hall and furniture for ICT. The sports halls and changing facilities are spacious and well kept. The library is large, attractive and well furnished. New departmental offices and sixth form study areas provide a more suitable working environment. The centre for students with severe learning, medical or physical difficulties is appropriate to their needs and brightened by excellent displays. Throughout the college the ample display boards with high quality presentations encourage learning and celebrate student achievements. The skilled site manager and his team have done much of the improvement work in a most cost-effective way.

48. The large and dispersed campus is generally adequate to meet curriculum needs but there are pressures on accommodation and some areas do not provide a good teaching environment. Many improvements have been made in the accommodation for science but it has laboratories in three different areas on different levels, with consequential difficulties for the technicians who have to move apparatus. Several laboratories still need refurbishment and some are poorly suited to practical work. A few teaching groups and teachers have no fixed base and have to move each lesson. PE has no classroom for its examination work. Graphics has no designated room. One DT area needs dividing in two to accommodate the two classes that now are taught together. Some mathematics and modern foreign languages teaching is dispersed and in non-specialist rooms. The Post 16 social area is too small for the numbers using it. There are some narrow corridors and small landings, causing congestion at busy times, even though there are one-way systems and good routines to ensure safety.

49. The college has a deficit budget. The quality of teaching continues to be the first priority for the students' education and the college spends an above average proportion of income on salaries of the experienced teaching staff. Consequently, there is less to spend on learning resources. The overall quantity and quality of learning resources are inadequate. They are meagre in geography, history, RE, Key Stage 3 modern foreign languages and in science. In some PE and geography examination courses, students purchase their own books. Students share books in a number of lessons.

50. The college works hard to supplement its income. It has bid successfully for a number of special grants that will benefit teaching and learning, such as a grant to improve small laboratories. Middle managers have had training in targeting spending more effectively. The resources and equipment for practical sports are good. The special needs unit is well equipped as is the music department. The level of computer provision throughout the college is good and improving although several departments such as art, music and geography still need hardware.

51. The combined library and resource centre is well organised and effectively run. It is open from 9.00 am until 7.00 p.m. each day and is busy during lessons, break and lunch times. Purchasing has been judicious, provision for sixth form has improved considerably, and there is a good fiction section for low attaining students. The centre is well equipped with

ICT hardware and appropriate software including Internet access. Books are well augmented by the wide selection of newspapers and journals.

52. The college is using its limited financial resources very effectively. The contingency fund is used prudently for the most urgent priorities. Specific grants are used for the intended purposes and control and audit of finances is sound. The curriculum is organised efficiently. There is a higher than usual contact ratio that helps the college maintain the broad Post 16 provision with only a small subsidy from the main college. The college results indicate good added value at each key stage. The college therefore provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. The college should now raise standards further by:-

- (1) meeting the statutory requirement for the teaching of RE in Key Stages 4 and Post 16;
- (2) resolving the problems caused by staff absence in the modern languages department so that all students receive a proper entitlement to specialist teaching;
- (3) considering successful strategies within the college and beyond in order to raise the standards of attainment of boys across the college at Key Stages 3 and 4;
- (4) seeking to alleviate the shortage of educational resources, particularly text books, and improving or providing specialist accommodation in DT and science and classroom accommodation for PE.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	244
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	36	41	15	2	0	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	1,079	201
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	63	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	53	12
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	266	15

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	3

Student mobility in the last college year

	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	9.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.4
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	129	116	236

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	76	64
	Girls	88	74	59
	Total	154	150	123
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	65 (57)	64 (60)	55 (60)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	30 (23)	36 (37)	19 (29)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	82	62
	Girls	101	97	65
	Total	179	179	127
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	77 (54)	76 (65)	54 (48)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	35 (8)	26 (24)	19 (15)
	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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	110	115	225

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	39	95	103
	Girls	55	105	109
	Total	94	200	212
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	42 (35)	89 (86.6)	94 (98.5)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	College	40 (35.2)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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	1999	33	34	67

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
College	17.3	20.1	18.8 (18)	3.7	2.7	3.2 (1.5)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	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 students who achieved all those they studied	College	17	100
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	1,277
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	67	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	79.029
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	563

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.2
Key Stage 4	17.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3,477,786
Total expenditure	3,543,296
Expenditure per student	2,760
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,716
Balance carried forward to next year	-54,794

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,280
Number of questionnaires returned	440

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	41	51	5	2	2
My child is making good progress in college.	40	49	5	1	6
Behaviour in the college is good.	28	56	6	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	49	15	5	8
The teaching is good.	36	52	4	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	46	12	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	58	34	4	1	2
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	34	3	1	3
The college works closely with parents.	34	46	12	3	5
The college is well led and managed.	49	42	4	1	5
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	47	5	1	6
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	38	4	1	6

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

ENGLISH

54. This is a strong department committed to raising standards which have improved significantly since the last inspection. Lessons are lively and stimulating and students enjoy English.

55. When students enter the college test results suggest that their verbal skills are below average. Attainment in the 1999 tests at the end of Year 9 was broadly in line with the national average and with similar schools. Students do better at the higher levels than is the case nationally. Over the last four years the performance of both boys and girls at the end of Year 9 is close to the national average for boys and girls although, in line with the national picture, girls do better than boys. The gap in performance is similar to the gap nationally. Test results in English at the end of Year 9 are better than in mathematics and science. Results for 2000 are not as good as the previous year.

56. In 1999 GCSE results in both English and English Literature were broadly average and English results were considerably improved on 1998. Performance in 2000 is very similar to 1999. By the end of Year 11 the gap in performance between boys and girls has widened so that in 1999 girls' performance is significantly better than boys. In both examinations girls were in line with the national average for girls - boys' results in both subjects were below the national average for boys. Attainment at the highest GCSE grades compares well with the national figures.

57. Students do well in A Level literature. The proportion attaining the highest grades in 1998 and 1999 was in line with national averages and nearly all students passed. Results in 2000 were equally strong.

58. Literacy skills are addressed in curriculum areas other than English, for example in history where the teaching of source skills at Key Stage 4 leads students to read critically and in Year 9 students are taught good structured writing skills. In geography there is much debate and discussion and students formally present their ideas to the class. There is frequent emphasis on the use of terminology in both geography and science. Geography offers opportunities for creative writing. In modern foreign languages, however, there are not enough writing tasks and little evidence of writing freely or narratively. At Post 16 GNVQ students are often involved in discussion and in presentation of their ideas. They are able to produce formal reports using the appropriate conventions. A Level design students talk well about the materials and processes involved in their work. Awareness of literacy strategies across the curriculum is variable at present and requires greater co-ordination.

59. Overall students make good progress in English lessons through the key stages. They make very good progress in some aspects of the subject. Students write with increasing confidence and in both Years 9 and 11 high attaining students are able to sustain ideas well and examine both poetry and prose carefully and in depth. They respond perceptively and their writing is technically competent. In Year 9, for example, they were able to comment well on a poem by Wilfred Owen. Lower attaining boys in Year 9 have more limited vocabulary and are insecure with spelling but were developing confidence through work designed to extend their range of vocabulary and attitude to language. Students in Year 8 with spelling problems were making very good progress with understanding suffixes and

have acquired a thorough knowledge of the rules of spelling. By Year 11 students' coursework shows they have a good grasp of themes and are able, for example, to discuss the nature of evil in Macbeth. High attaining students can critically examine a poem and support their ideas from the text whilst low attainers work hard to produce coursework of good length which is well presented and accurate. Drafting skills are well used. As they move up the college students make very good progress and develop much confidence in speaking and listening. They become very good listeners and are able to respond positively in discussion or to questioning. They are keen to express their ideas, are able to sustain them and enjoy participating.

60. Progress in Years 12 and 13 is very good. Students respond very well to the intellectual challenge presented in lessons. They take part in debate with enthusiasm and many demonstrate good knowledge of the text. In discussion about a Julian Barnes novel Year 13 students were articulate and perceptive drawing on the text to support their opinions. Most have a good grasp of technical terminology to describe features of writing.

61. Overall teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 is good. A number of lessons were very good or excellent. At Post 16 teaching is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The very best lessons at all stages are characterised by consistently high expectations and intellectual rigour. There is some very challenging teaching at Post 16. Lessons are very carefully planned. Teachers choose tasks which are stimulating and present students with a good measure of challenge, for example a low attaining group in Year 9 were studying a Tennyson poem, whilst other students in Year 9 were reading Wilfred Owen. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and are enthusiastic about it so that lessons are lively and interesting. They proceed at a good pace and tasks are varied. The objectives for each lesson are made explicit and tasks are carefully explained with clear parameters so that students know exactly what is expected of them. Relationships in the classroom are very good indeed, there is much warmth and teachers have very good knowledge of students' individual or group needs. For example, in Year 8 students were working independently and at their own level to examine features of a non-fiction text whilst at Post 16 the teacher used his knowledge of the group's progress in deciding to encourage students to focus on form rather than content in the novel. Students are given very good feedback through the comments written on their work and in discussion. Good support is provided for students with special needs.

62. Students respond very well in English lessons. They have mature attitudes to their work and take it seriously. They work hard and concentrate well. They co-operate well together, are willing to accept responsibility. In some lessons they would gain from more opportunity to discuss ideas independently. Post 16 students are mature and enthusiastic about their work.

63. This is a strong department which benefits from excellent leadership. It is managed thoughtfully and with sensitivity. The head of department provides a clear sense of direction and teachers work together co-operatively and with a strong commitment to improvement. Curriculum planning is excellent, provides a supportive framework for teachers without being prescriptive and is regularly reviewed. There is good emphasis in the curriculum on the teaching of language skills and a wide range of strategies to encourage students to read. The excellent college library is well used in English lessons and teachers are very well supported by library staff. Arrangements for grouping students are considered very carefully and made on the basis of student need. Assessment procedures are rigorous, accurate and students understand the grades they are given. Marking is regular and provides students with very constructive comments and targets for improvement. Good notes are kept on progress made in lessons and teachers are well informed about how well students have

done in the past. Awareness of the special needs of students is strong. The department offers excellent enrichment opportunities for students at all ages.

64. The department has a clear focus on raising the standards of all students. There is some monitoring of teaching but so far there has been too little opportunity for teachers to observe and share the very good practice which exists in this department. Over the last few years a range of carefully considered strategies to improve students' success, especially of boys has been introduced. These include, for example, ways of raising boys' esteem, choosing more boy-friendly texts and trialling boy only groups.

65. The department has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection. Standards have improved significantly. Students now reach the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Girls' attainment has improved. Low attaining students in line with other students now make good progress. Improvement to departmental planning has continued and lesson objectives are clear in the minds of teachers and students.

Drama

66. Drama is offered through PSHE in year 7, through the modular programme in Year 8 and through the extended curriculum programme in Year 9. The delivery of the programme in Years 7, 8 and 9 within a carousel means that skills in drama are not systematically developed throughout the year. The varied means of providing drama in the curriculum is innovative and worth pursuing but inconsistency of delivery and content should be addressed.

67. Drama is offered at GCSE and Theatre Studies at A and AS Level. GCSE results are significantly below average for grades A*-C when compared to national averages. Drama has an open access approach at GCSE. Students may study it irrespective of prior attainment and experience. A small number of students study Theatre Studies at A Level and in 2000 all were successful in achieving a pass grade. The popularity of drama and standards of attainment in the examination years are affected by lack of opportunity to develop and consolidate basic skills and knowledge in Key Stage 3.

68. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3 is average overall. Those students in Year 7 following the drama course are beginning to show control of movement and an awareness of space. Students in Year 9 can evaluate their performances and demonstrate a good awareness of the requirements of a successful performance, for example, a fight. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 4 is at least average. In a Year 10 lesson students prove to be good improvisers developing role and character, and responding effectively to other performers. Students in Year 11 present convincing group scripted dramas. Attainment in lessons in the sixth form is above average. Monologues performed by Year 13 are paced well and are thoroughly convincing and sensitively handled.

69. Teaching is good overall and very good at GCSE and A Level. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are well prepared and give clear explanations and demonstrations. They challenge their students to concentrate and co-operate in activities and lead very good review and evaluation sessions within lessons. As a result students make considerable creative, mental and physical effort in class. They concentrate well and show great interest in the subject. At Key Stage 4 through good review and evaluation they are well aware of their progress. In the sixth form students they have well developed critical skills.

70. Students' attitudes to drama are good at Key Stage 3. They respond sensibly for the most part and work well together in most lessons. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form attitudes are very good and excellent. Collaborative work is very productive and all work

observed was characterised by great maturity.

MATHEMATICS

71. The mathematics department is currently in a transitional phase. There is a new head of department who is overseeing the development of the national numeracy scheme at Key Stage 3 together with implementing changes in syllabuses at Key Stage 4 and at A Level. Standards in Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with national averages in 1999. Results in 2000 were better than the previous year. GCSE results were very close to the national average in 1999 but dipped somewhat in 2000. A Level results are good in mathematics and above the national average.

72. At Key Stage 3 almost all teaching is satisfactory or better, most often it is good and sometimes it is very good. At Key Stage 4 all teaching is satisfactory or better, most often it is good or very good. All A Level teaching is good or very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics and are able to convey mathematical concepts clearly so that students grasp the ideas securely. Teachers' expectations are appropriate for both age and attainment. Classwork and homework are regularly assessed and provide bases for effective setting procedures. Tests are held every term to confirm students' progress; the results are communicated to students and clearly kept on record cards. Homework is regularly set and marked and is generally appropriate for the attainment of the students.

73. When support staff are provided they work effectively to help students with special educational needs. In this respect support teachers work very effectively whether they are working with targeted students or as team teachers. The progress made by students with special needs in mathematics is good

74. The management of students is very good. Most lessons are calmly led, follow an effective pattern and teachers show good classroom practice. Rare examples of poor student behaviour are dealt with quietly; good behaviour and progress are praised appropriately. Lessons generally start with question-and-answer sessions where confident students are keen to demonstrate their knowledge, less assured students are usually drawn into discussion and are able both to learn, and show off their learning well. Students work hard in maths lessons and show a high level of commitment. Their interest in the subject is high and concentration generally good although some low attaining students' concentration wavers towards the end of a lesson. The standards of work produced by students are satisfactory across the age range. Classwork is above average for all students and shows clear evidence of sound progress. Most exercise books are well cared for and work is generally neat and tidy, showing understanding of the subject. The positive and mature attitudes shown by most students in the college constitute a major strength of the department. The department successfully promotes high standards of behaviour and a strong work ethic. As yet, however, these high standards and good classroom work are not being translated into examination success.

75. Numeracy is effectively taught and reinforced at Key Stage 3. Numeracy work from Key Stage 2 is consolidated in Year 7 and most students make sound progress. However, some low attaining Year 7 students struggle within a mixed ability environment when there is no classroom support. Evidence from geography, science and DT indicates that students use their numeracy skills competently. Nevertheless there is a need to ensure that the college adopts a common approach to numeracy.

76. The college participates annually in the UK Mathematics challenge. Students from every year group including the sixth form are entered each year. Students who do well in this challenge obtain certificates and the proportion that gain certification is pleasing. This year four college-based teams will take part in a mathematics competition for Year 8 students. Higher attaining students have the opportunity to take part in the "Horizon-widening" scheme where the maths department organises extra-mural activities that are followed up in college. Participants in the scheme are awarded certificates of achievement. These approaches successfully raise the interest of students in mathematics.

77. The classrooms used for teaching mathematics are, with some exceptions, good. They are spacious, clean and have good access to natural light. The subject is taught on two different sites, however, which is not ideal for management of the department. However, most teachers are experienced so minimising any problem. Good standards of behaviour promoted by staff result in mathematics classrooms which are tidy; there is little evidence of graffiti either on desks or on exercise books. There are pleasing mathematical displays that include examples of students' work and wall charts describing mathematics from other cultures. Some low attaining groups are taught in non-specialist and unsuitable classrooms, sometimes as many three or four different classrooms during a week. This practice undervalues the students and leads to unsatisfactory progress. Resources in the subject are currently barely adequate. With the onset of new courses at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and at A Level the department currently lacks modern textbooks and is making do with a mixture of old textbooks and internally prepared worksheets. These arrangements are a reasonable interim but the situation should not persist too long.

78. The management of the department, although new, is very competent. There are a number of new schemes and initiatives that are being developed and are addressed on the current, excellent development plan. These include curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation of staff, use of ICT, student data to guide better teaching and learning and the improvement of literacy within the subject. The key issue, however, is the need to develop new courses and new schemes of work to accommodate the changes that are taking place at all key stages. These schemes of work (responsibility for which has been delegated to various members of staff) will need constant review and possible modification as the year progresses. The Year 7 scheme of work, in particular, must address the progress of all students. The use of computers in the teaching and learning of mathematics requires attention. The department makes good use of graphical calculators at A Level but not at Key Stages 3 and 4. The use of computers in the classroom is also patchy. There were no lessons observed during the inspection in which computers were used.

79. Overall the staff of this department form a well managed group of experienced and hard working professionals who work well together to make a good team. With continued commitment the department should be able to cope with the challenge of change.

SCIENCE

80. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last few years. In 1999, results were in line with the national average, but below the average for schools with a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. Students' results in science were not as good as in mathematics and English. Boys under-performed relative to the boys' national average to a greater extent than the girls did in comparison with the girls'

national average. Science standards in 2000 were much better at the end of Key Stage 3 than in 1999. GCSE results in science have shown a significant improvement since the last inspection report. In 1999, the percentage of A*-G grades was above the national average and the percentage of A*-C grades just below the national average. Again boys underperformed to a greater extent than girls. At Post 16 the A Level entries are too few in chemistry and physics to indicate trends or to make meaningful comparison with national standards. In 1999 the biology results were above the national average in terms of pass rate and average point score. The trend is of improving standards in the sixth form. In 2000 all three science courses achieved a hundred percent pass rate.

81. The evidence from students' work and the lessons observed indicates that standards are consistent with the improving standards in the 2000 public tests and examinations. Students make good progress, in each key stage and in the sixth form, relative to their prior attainment and so their achievement is good. Students' experimental and investigative skills are good. Key Stage 3 students have a good understanding of the need to control variables in an experiment and can predict results. By the end of Key Stage 4 the work of high-attaining students is detailed and thorough and their skills are at a high level. Average-attaining and low-attaining students have good planning and observing skills but their analysing and evaluation skills are weaker. Literacy skills are sound with satisfactory development of literacy in science. There is good emphasis on the correct use of scientific terminology. Numeracy skills are sound and developed well in science. Graphical work is of a satisfactory standard overall but low-attaining students have problems with scale and drawing lines of "best fit". Students are competent in using computers to research and analyse scientific information. Data capture work needs to be developed further. The ability of students in both key stages to recall scientific facts is sound but their ability to apply their knowledge in new situations is weaker. Post 16 students have a good grasp of the relevant scientific knowledge and are encouraged to read around the subject. This helps the development of their intellectual skills. Special needs students with statements make good progress because of the good support they receive. Other students on the special needs register do not make as much progress as expected because of the lack of in-class support.

82. Overall, the quality of teaching is good across the whole age range. Teaching was very good in nearly half the lessons observed in Key Stage 3 and in a third of the lessons in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. A strength of the teaching is the very good relationships between the teachers and the students. Encouraging and supportive teachers engender in the students a positive attitude and interest in their work in science. This results in good learning. Very good subject knowledge and understanding is shown by the teachers' clear, lively explanations and in the questioning of students, which builds on their understanding. Teachers manage their classes well and insist on high standards of work and behaviour. Lessons are well planned and organised and use a variety of teaching methods, although objectives are not always clearly set out at the outset of a lesson and reviewed at the end. Generally teachers have high expectations but some lessons should have greater challenge and pace. Learning would be improved further by providing short-term targets to show students how to improve their work and progress would be facilitated if some of the marking was more analytical. Students enjoy their science and co-operate well in group practical work. They generally have good listening skills, sustain concentration well and come to lessons prepared to work. However, some students lack confidence in their own ability and do not readily volunteer answers to questions posed by the teacher or indeed ask many questions themselves.

83. A very good A Level lesson on the biological basis of behaviour involved a very imaginative practical simulation of foraging strategy. This was designed to introduce students to optimisation problems faced by animals and to give them practice at generating and testing hypotheses. The students enjoyed this approach and the practical exercise gave

them a deeper understanding of this topic. The lesson was very well planned and challenged the students' thinking so that their learning was very good. In an effective Year 8 lesson on chemical formulae, students used symbol cards representing different elements and groups with their respective valencies. Students were asked to fit them together to make as many compounds as they could. They used the Periodic Table to find out the names of the elements in order to name the compounds they had formed. The lesson aimed to teach students where formulae come from and involved the students in an active learning experience. The teacher constantly checked student understanding and moved the lesson forward at a crisp pace so that the students made very good progress.

83. The head of department provides very good leadership and management of the department, with a focus on monitoring and evaluating the work of the department in order to raise standards. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. Results at ages 14, 16 and 18 have all improved and there has been an overall improvement in teaching and learning. The department has the capacity to improve further because of thoughtful and supportive leadership and a positive team spirit committed to raising achievement. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good and the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is very good. Curriculum time in Key Stage 4 is insufficient to meet the requirements of the double award science course adequately and this has a negative impact on standards in spite of dedicated teaching. It is difficult to complete some practical tasks in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form within fifty-minute lessons.

85. The spread of the science accommodation in three different areas of the college does not provide for a good learning environment and presents problems for organisation and close working. The present technician establishment is insufficient to service fully the practical requirements of the subject and resources are inadequate.

86. The science department is an improving department with very hard-working and committed teachers, which has reviewed and trialled a number of different strategies over the last few years. It now needs a period of consolidation and to focus on fewer development areas in order to have a maximum effect on learning in the classroom.

ART

87. Standards of attainment in art of the majority of students meet national expectations. Students' attainment when they enter the college is slightly below expectations. They make good progress and, by the end of Key Stage 3, most reach standards close to the national average though the attainment of a significant number is still below that expected for their age. In the lessons observed, there was good development of observational skills as in tonal portraits and the construction of well proportioned three-dimensional figures in Year 9. Students show increasing ability to use a variety of materials and techniques appropriately, for example in still life painting in Year 7 and clay work in Year 8.

88. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in 1999 was considerably below the national average with a fall in results in 2000. The department, however, achieved a 100% pass rate at grades A*-G in 1999. This reflects departmental policy in encouraging open access for students at all levels of attainment with examination entries well above average. The department sets high standards and marking of examination work is stringent. Attainment in lessons at the beginning of the college year meets expectations. In Year 10, a class was working collaboratively and inventively to develop totem poles in wire and card whilst another demonstrated a good grasp of new

techniques in developing their first textile assignment. In Year 11, there is sound skill development in a range of media. Assignments are well presented with appropriate supporting studies. Though art groups show satisfactory drawing skills, these are under-developed in textile work. Displays of recent GCSE work show some lack of confidence in independent study.

89. At Post 16, attainment is broadly average. The percentage of students achieving A-B grades in the A Level examination in 1999 was close to the national average. Scrutiny of the work of Year 12 students, though at an early stage indicates strengths in life drawing, in painting on a large scale and in the supporting studies of higher attaining students in both art and art / textiles. Contextual studies are well used to inform practical work and there is a good level of independent experimentation by Year 13.

90. The quality of teaching is very good particularly in view of the current re-organisation of teaching groups to meet staff absence. Visiting artists makes an excellent input. Teachers all have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, their planning is very good and lessons well organised. Expectations are usually high and good use is made of a range of teaching methods and resources to reinforce learning. Time is well used though the reduced lesson time will make it difficult to cover all National Curriculum requirements fully. All teachers provide good support for students in lessons through well targeted and on-going assessment of their work particularly at Post 16.

91. The quality of teaching has a direct impact on learning which is almost invariably good. In most lessons observed, there were clear gains in knowledge and skills as, for example, in work from direct observation and in three-dimensional studies. At Post 16, although students make progress, the single lesson allows insufficient time for experimentation and the consolidation of skills in preparation for independent study.

92. Students show very positive attitudes towards art. They are attentive and enthusiastic in lessons, stay on task and behave well. There is good co-operation and resources are used sensibly. Some sketchbooks, particularly at Key Stage 3, indicate a less positive response to homework with a need to develop greater personal responsibility. Students with special needs make very good progress. Gifted and talented students make appropriate progress.

93. The department offers a broad curriculum with a good balance between practical work and contextual studies. Schemes of work allow teachers flexibility to interpret themes whilst ensuring all students have a comparable experience. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not, however, fully met at Key Stage 3 where there is no current use of ICT. Well-structured and appropriate programmes of study are in place for special needs groups. Curriculum provision is considerably enhanced by the opportunities taken to involve visiting artists in teaching, the life classes for Post 16 students and the extra-curricular programme of gallery visits at home and abroad

94. Sound procedures are in place to monitor students' performance on a day to day basis. Homework is well marked, often with supportive comment and marks appropriately recorded. No evidence was available of assessment of project work or the use of assessment to inform planning other than on individual basis.

95. There is very good leadership and management by the acting head of department though the lack of stable leadership should be resolved. At the time of inspection, all

permanent and temporary teachers were providing very good support for the subject with a strong commitment to improve provision and ensure success for students.

96. In the absence of a permanent head of department, documentation is limited and monitoring of teaching informal. There is a good match of teaching staff to need though with some short-term reduction in the high quality technical support normally available. Accommodation is adequate and well equipped but some rooms are at a distance from the main art suite and the mobile classroom does not provide an ideal environment for a practical subject. The department is generally well resourced other than for ICT and for display areas for examination work.

97. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the time of the last inspection though results at GCSE in the highest grades have declined in recent years. There is still some lack of independence by lower attaining students and a need to improve drawing skills of those taking art / textiles at Key Stage 4.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. At the end of Key Stage 3, students are achieving levels of attainment broadly in-line with the national average. Girls achieve higher standards than boys but the difference is not significant. At GCSE, the 1999 cohort achieved standards slightly below average overall with varied results across each of the design and technology subjects. Attainment in resistant materials, where the greater majority of students are boys, is significantly below the national norm. Graphics students achieved results in-line with the norm. Results in food subjects are above average for girls and broadly average for boys. Post 16 examination results are mainly good. A Level design and technology results are slightly below average in the higher A-B grades, but very good overall. In food technology, results are above average in the higher grades and excellent overall.

99. In the lessons observed at Key Stage 3 the standards were good. Basic skills are well developed in textiles, where Year 7 students know how to plan and apply surface decoration to fabrics. Good standards of investigation are found in Year 7 food technology, where students analyse packaging through disassembly. They demonstrate good knowledge of how the graphics on packaging helps promote and sell the product and how the design of the package protects the contents from damage and contamination. In a Year 8 food technology lesson, students were able to conduct a sensory analysis of food. They were able to judge the quality of potato crisps by evaluating their visual appeal, aroma, taste and texture. Students are articulate and talk knowledgeably about what they know and can do, as in a Year 8 control technology group where students explained how a sequence of commands programmed into a computer acts as a command loop. They understand control systems for example, to regulate traffic flow using traffic lights. They make good use of numerical skills in measuring, setting out, cutting and assembling a product accurately. Students in a Year 9 class marked out the positions of axles for cams and pulley systems. ICT skills were effectively applied in a Year 9 lesson, where DesignView software was used to accurately draw products before making. SEN students make good progress at Key Stage 3, are well-integrated into lessons and achieve well.

100. At Key Stage 4, standards are satisfactory. They are very good in food technology, where, in Year 11, students are able to work independently. They are confident and experiment with ingredients to balance flavours and textures to develop snack meals, such as spaghetti fritters. Students are well organised and set themselves a detailed time plan to ensure successful completion of their work within the lesson. Standards are good in graphics and students have good command of the basic skills of graphic communication, for example,

in rendering techniques. In an all male Year 11 class in resistant materials, however, students were able to make well finished products in wood and metal but were weak in designing skills. There is a good use of ICT applications within the work of all design and technology subjects. Students work independently using the departmentally based computers to plan products and improve the presentation of their folders. There is good work in the construction of graphs, databases and design applications. There is no provision for computer-aided manufacturing processes. SEN students receive good individual support in lessons and make good progress.

101. At Post 16, students achieve standards above the national average. In A Level food technology, they have a good knowledge of nutrition. They are able to work independently when carrying out experiments to find the component parts of staple foods, for example, calculating the gluten content of different types of flour. In the newly introduced hospitality and catering course, Year 12 students have gained important basic skills through industrial experience. They have all spent time working in local hotels and restaurants. Students studying catering are able as a group to plan a finger buffet menu and then take responsibility for various parts of the menu as individuals. They are mature in their attitudes, and work safely and hygienically. In theory lessons they show a very good understanding of the need for temperature control to prevent the contamination of prepared food. The Year 13 A Level design and technology students are achieving good standards. Their personal projects are varied and suitably challenging. Students understand gearing and ratios when working, for example on designing a motorised scooter and developing the gearing control of a mountain bike. Aesthetic design is promoted through projects such as a portable display unit and a decorative dividing screen for an open-plan office.

102. Standards have improved since the last inspection. At Key Stage 3, they were satisfactory and now are good. At Key Stage 4 the standards reported last time have been maintained. Standards are now above average in food technology, broadly average in graphic products, but below average in resistant materials. There has been significant improvement across most areas of the department in the construction of design folders. Most students have a sound understanding of the design process and demonstrate very good presentation skills in their folder work. The curriculum has been extended since the last inspection and provides a rich and comprehensive coverage of all aspects of design and technology, including computer aided design.

103. Strong leadership supports the department and departmental staff have been united into an efficient team. Standards of teaching are very good throughout the department and play a major role in developing good learning skills in students at all stages. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and continually seek to improve their own learning. Display is effectively used to act as learning tool, as in the manufacturing process of bread making. Other displays include evaluation procedures and stages in the making of pastry. At Key Stage 3, students respond positively to well-planned lessons, as in a Year 7 electronics class, where clear and simple instructions develop students' confidence. They are able to construct a circuit that uses a light sensor to control a lighting system. Students quickly develop research and investigation skills and regularly use library and computer resources to gain information for use in their project folders. At Key Stage 4, standards of teaching are mainly good and sometimes very good. Excellent relationships are formed and students are encouraged to contribute towards lessons through discussion and debate. This was strongly in evidence in a Year 10 graphics lesson, where students discussed the techniques employed by professional graphic designers in promotional materials. Students are appropriately challenged and encouraged to experiment with their ideas, for example, in food technology, where they modify their recipes to improve the quality of taste and visual attractiveness. All lessons proceed at a very good pace. Assessment procedures play a valuable part in providing students with knowledge about their progress. Assessment sheets

match the learning requirements of each project and include opportunity for students to contribute through self-assessment. Teaching at Post 16 is exceptionally good on all courses. There are very strong and effective links with a range of local industries which are enthusiastic and supportive in providing work experience and expertise for the college. The quality and use of on-going assessment is particularly effective and teachers provide excellent resources for lessons such as the materials on temperature control and contamination for the hospitality and catering group.

104. There are some shortcomings in the design of the existing resistant materials workshops. They are open-plan and are congested and noisy when used by large groups. Their design restricts the development of large-scale projects and has an adverse affect on standards. The department does not have a graphic products base and is insufficiently resourced for graphic communications and computer aided manufacturing processes. The department is about to benefit from a major refurbishment of its accommodation, however, and the addition of a control technology base and the refurbishment of food technology rooms will provide much needed resources for the development of the design and technology curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

105. Students enter the college with prior experience of Geography at Key Stage 2 which is often insecure. This is tackled in Key Stage 3 and students make good progress gaining subject knowledge and familiarity with the skills to harness it. Whilst there is a wide range of attainment at the end of the key stage, average attainment falls slightly below national expectations but standards are high measured against prior attainment. This good level of progress is maintained through Key Stage 4 and, again, whilst GCSE performance is below national averages almost all students achieve "in line with ability" as reported in the previous inspection. There is some excellent coursework reflecting deep understanding and fluency with representational and cartographical techniques. The 1999 results were broadly typical but, to raise standards still further, the department might usefully address the C/D boundary and seek to close the gap between the performance of boys and girls, which is significantly wider than in the national picture.

106. Students need only a grade C or better to continue with Post 16 Geography. They are well served by teachers whose particular strengths are well deployed. Students are driven hard and generally make very good progress. Nearly all A Level candidates in 1999 passed with a spread of grades at least in line with national averages. The most recent results, for 2000, were not quite as impressive.

107. Whilst teaching is never unsatisfactory, good and very good teaching at all levels is the norm. Schemes of work and classroom approaches no longer suffer from any limitations in variety as previously reported. Tasks are much more clearly defined so that, with increasing use of strategies for differentiation and extension, the particularly broad spread of student need is accommodated and students are increasingly being challenged. A Year 11 group wasted no time before plunging from a worthwhile and searching recapitulation of previous lessons into an exercise of discovery built around a market gardening case study. The pace of the lesson never faltered. There was a well handled and uncompromising question and answer sessions demanding detail, clarification and quantification of vague climatic terms, using students' local knowledge to draw comparisons and bring reality so engaging the class and holding their interest throughout. Excellent progress was inevitable as in a Year 9 class which collaborated enthusiastically to apply locational factors to industry. Students enjoyed justifying choices and confidently presenting conclusions in a lesson which

offered appropriate opportunities for each individual.

108. Much good learning occurred also in a Key Stage 4 geography lesson in the Support Unit where the subject was strengthening awareness of home address, of place and distance and of left and right. Post 16 teaching is especially vibrant. Students are challenged with much well supported self study and careful integration of field work. Learning is strengthened by student/teacher relationships which are invariably relaxed and productive.

109. Students generally take pride in their work, some of which enhances the high quality of display throughout the department. They respond positively when challenged, collaborate well in group situations and participate willingly in lessons. They are rarely reluctant to offer answers or to comment from personal experience. They clearly find the subject enjoyable without realising the extent to which their teachers expose them to creative writing, to reading and understanding, to debate and to the use of number and graphs and so consciously and very effectively discharge their obligation to contribute to the development of basic skills.

110. Geography is in the temporary custody of an experienced and enthusiastic teacher with good ideas and appropriate plans. He should be encouraged to sustain existing developments - processes of assessment, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the further use of ICT though handicapped in this area of development by the absence of departmental hardware.

111. Current levels of funding necessitate sharing of class sets of basic texts, hamper the development of resources and require Post 16 students to purchase their own textbooks.

HISTORY

112. This is a very good department staffed by a hard working team committed to raising standards and to improving students' experience of history. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in standards and in opportunities for students to enjoy lively and interesting lessons.

113. Attainment on entry of students is weighted towards the lower attainers, but standards are above average for both boys and girls by the age of fourteen. This is not yet adequately reflected in teacher assessments but is clear in lessons and in students' written work. New ways of assessing are being introduced which give a better focus to lessons as well as to students' understanding of their progress. More refined assessment will enable the department to discern those at level six and above in National Curriculum history more effectively.

114. In one Year 9 lesson students had completed essays discussing whether the Edwardian Age was a 'golden age' in British history. There was some high standard work in terms of understanding, and also in sustained writing skills, notably among the boys. Last term Year 9 had ended the summer with local history research assignments. These were well structured and gave many students opportunities to produce outstanding work including much that was original. The department is noted for integrating local history opportunities into the National Curriculum. Students have won prizes for their work from the Cumbria Local History Federation for several years now. A very good foundation for GCSE history is laid in Key Stage 3.

115. By the end of Key Stage 4 history results are close to the national average at grades A* to C and better than the national average for the full range of grades, A* to G. This is an

improving situation in a department with an inclusive policy to enter all those who have completed coursework or have any chance of achieving a grade. The difference between boys and girls is not significant and not noticeable in lessons where most students are confident and contribute well. All students, including those with special needs, achieve well in relation to their abilities.

116. Standards are good at A Level. Although numbers are low, the subject is becoming more popular and last year all candidates achieved their estimated grades, with a 100% pass rate weighted to the upper grades. In Year 12 students had already made good progress in knowledge and understanding of Pitt's period in office and in preparing for their first modular examination in January. The teaching is well focused on the new requirements.

117. Students are very responsive to the history teaching they receive. Attitudes are very good across all years. They behave well and enjoy history. Much work was seen that showed good levels of motivation and interest, willingness to persist with tasks and to make extra effort. Students work well together when there is group or paired work, relations between teachers and students are good and students behave with courtesy. In a Year 11 lower ability group there were a few students with attendance problems, but the students present were co-operative and willing to do their best although they found the work on Stalin's Russia difficult. This reflects well on the quality of the teaching which is very good and included several excellent lessons.

118. Teachers' skills at managing their classes are very good. They know their subject well and focus lessons on specific skills. The aims are explained, good continuity is established from previous work, and lessons end well. Teachers are very good at finding enjoyable ways for students to learn. In Year 7 lessons some students were examining museum artefacts in order to learn about different sorts of evidence in history, how to investigate, and how to sort objects chronologically. In another Year 7 lesson the students became police detectives in order to investigate a crime and so learn about enquiry skills, how to ask questions, not jump to conclusions, and then construct a logical and coherent explanation. The level of questions asked about the 'evidence' improved significantly during this excellent lesson. Further up the college lessons were notable for energy, drive and good use of time. Literacy is specifically addressed through teaching writing skills and by teaching the vocabulary essential for each unit of study.

119. There is very good leadership of the subject both at faculty and departmental levels. managers set an example of commitment and good practice. Appropriate policies are in place and there is good vision for the future. Standards of teaching and learning are monitored effectively. The head of department has very good knowledge of his subject which enables him to keep up with developments, to disseminate them and to choose resources judiciously thus making the best use of limited funding. The quality of in-house resources is good and an important contribution to effective teaching. Even so, more books are needed so that they do not have to be shared. The library is well organised to support history teaching effectively. A good programme of fieldwork enriches the curriculum. The annual battlefields trip is one that both students and parents value greatly. Parents appreciate the unit leaflets that inform them about each unit of work in a clear and simple style.

120. There are plans for ICT to be used more in teaching although some good work was seen. Some numeracy work is needed through the use of quantitative historical sources.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

121. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are broadly in-line with the national average. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. At Key Stage 4, boys' GCSE results are significantly below the national average and girls' are above it but numbers taking the course are low.

122. On entry, standards are below average and students' experience is inconsistent. The Key Stage 3 course provides the necessary foundation skills and applications. In class standards are above the national average. Students are confident in the use of the keyboard and conversant with a range of ICT applications. In Year 8, students are taught control applications and are able to programme a sequence of commands. They understand how a similar sequence in a control loop can operate household appliances, such as in a washing machine. Year 9 students can draw products in two dimensions using DesignView. Differentiated programmes provide higher attaining students with the opportunity to realise their designs in a three-dimensional format. Key Stage 3 folders contain a broad range of ICT work. There is good evidence of computers being an integral part of the planned content of work in many subjects although this needs to be developed in art, music, geography and mathematics. In Year 8, students study the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 as a project in history. They use a font that is evocative of the period and import maps from the Internet showing the route of the two armies. Some students have used scanners to incorporate photographs within the text of their project. Students with special needs have as much ICT time as others and students from the learning support unit are provided with good resources, including concept keyboards, word recognition programmes and visual prompts for spelling. They make good progress. Statutory requirements are fully met.

123. In the classes observed at Key Stage 4, standards in the GCSE group were below average. Standards are above average in Year 11 business studies and office applications courses. Students have good computer skills and are able to work quickly and accurately in a range of applications, including spreadsheets, word processing and desktop publishing programmes. Lower attaining students in Year 11 achieve appropriate standards. They are working towards the AEB basic test (AQA) award scheme. They are well motivated and able to design a company logo using clip art and graphics applications. In a Year 11 personal and social education class, students were capable ICT users and worked confidently when drafting their record of personal achievement. Project folders contain a comprehensive range of applications used at Key Stage 4. Statutory requirements are met. There are no specified ICT courses for Post 16 students, although evidence in folders, and in the individual work of students indicates that standards are above average. The majority of students at each key stage incorporate good presentation skills in their work. Technical vocabulary is used at all stages.

124. Since the last inspection there has been a major improvement in resourcing, computers are more powerful and are well distributed throughout the college. Students have greater access to ICT. This is seen in technology, and business studies classes, where a number of applications, including computer aided design, are used by individual students within their work. Computers are sited in positions adjacent to a number of classrooms and additional facilities are nearly ready. There are very good resources based in the college library, including Internet access, a large CD ROM collection and colour printers. The quality of teaching has improved, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in business studies and office applications courses. Assessment, recording and reporting of the ICT content has been incorporated into the assessment procedures for all major subjects.

125. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good. The core programme is the responsibility of the technology department. The course is well organised and effectively taught. Staff are well qualified and have a good knowledge of the subject. Teachers have

developed very good relationships with classes and students are confident learners. The high quality of teaching is evident in Year 8, where students studying control technology make very good progress. The objectives of the lesson are outlined through a comprehensive introduction and the lesson has good pace. Students are challenged in core ICT lessons and are motivated by effective open-ended questioning techniques. There is a sense of purpose in lessons, as in a computer graphics lesson, where all students successfully developed a two-dimensional drawing of a product. At Key Stage 4, courses in business studies, office applications, and technology are well taught and students' progress is monitored through good assessment procedures. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and students work independently on tasks involving ICT applications. Lessons have a clear focus and students make good progress, for example, in science where a Year 11, lower attainment group, used the Internet to learn about fossils. Good learning also took place in a Year 10 English class, where students were taught how to scan photographs and include them in the design and layout of a brochure. Post 16 students are taught the necessary skills of ICT to meet course requirements. Knowledgeable teachers teach them on a one to one basis. Post 16 students are self-motivated and independent. They make full use of the ICT provision within the college.

126. There is a continuing need for regular in-service development for staff. The quality and appropriateness of Key Stage 4 courses should be monitored. Provision for computer aided manufacturing in technology and data-logging equipment in science is inadequate.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

127. In spite of the recent long term absence of a key member of staff, the modern foreign languages department is very effective and its leadership is strong and clear sighted, promoting high standards and an enjoyment of language learning.

128. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection to the point where it is now good or very good in the large majority of lessons; in the remainder it is satisfactory. Teachers are proficient speakers of French, German or Italian, and in some cases are equally competent in two languages. This generally leads to a sensitive use of the foreign language in the classroom and as a result students are comfortable with hearing and actively using the language. In such cases many have good accent and pronunciation and respond naturally to instructions. When teaching relies too much on English as the means of communication students are noticeably less confident in speaking and understanding.

129. Most lessons are planned imaginatively and make use of a wide and often colourful variety of methods and resources. This inspires students to take an active part in the lesson and to practise new items of language in different contexts. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, where higher attaining students were preparing for the spoken content of their French GCSE, the teacher set up a situation where they practised the same dialogue with a number of different partners. This resulted in very thorough learning and a much greater confidence in speaking. High expectations and a brisk demanding pace of work also characterise most lessons, including those for students with special needs who respond eagerly and are fully involved. When teachers insist that students use the foreign language to make simple requests, such as asking for paper or for something to be repeated, students take real pleasure in their achievement and are motivated to build on their success. Equally, students enjoy the challenge of demanding homework and respond well when their pronunciation is corrected sensitively.

130. Teachers are very successful, through their firm but friendly management of

students, in creating a calm environment where the best learning can take place. Relationships are very good in such cases; students are mostly well disposed to learning languages, co-operate well with their teachers and each other, and generally behave with exemplary maturity. This applies equally to boys and girls, and to students at all levels of attainment. Any restlessness or lack of concentration arises from teaching that lacks variety of method and gives students too little to involve or challenge them. This is particularly true of the German classes which are currently receiving little or no teaching due to the absence of a full time teacher. In these cases students, although occupied with written tasks and generally well behaved, are making little progress and losing motivation.

131. The setting and marking of students' written work are important areas where the department's practice is uneven and in need of improvement. More written work in the foreign language needs to be given in both key stages and opportunities to write in different registers, such as simple poetry or journalism, could motivate keen linguists to use language in interesting ways. The routine marking of work in Key Stages 3 and 4, although encouraging, is insufficiently rigorous in insisting on correction or repetition of sub-standard effort. Students would also benefit from a regular opportunity to read freely in the foreign language at their own pace, and to make use of ICT to enrich their experience.

132. GCSE examination results in French and German over the past few years have been somewhat below the national average in the proportion of higher grades gained, but better than average in the numbers achieving a pass grade. Consistent with the national picture, girls did significantly better than boys. When seen in the context of the college's policy of entering all but a very small number for a GCSE language, these results are commendable and reflect well on the quality of teaching and the increasing popularity of languages within the college. This can also be seen in the good numbers opting for foreign exchanges and visits, and those who continue with two languages to GCSE. Students taking A Level French and German in past years have been too few to compare usefully with national figures, but results in 1999 in both subjects were above average.

133. By the time students reach the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of many of them, particularly those in higher sets, is well in line with national expectations. Where teaching is strong standards are often rather better than expected. By the end of a Year 9 lesson, for example, students were able to express themselves with greater confidence in commendable German about their likes and dislikes in college subjects. Brisk challenging teaching ensured that everyone was kept appropriately active. The attainment of students in groups that currently receive little or no formal teaching is below that expected.

134. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards in lessons in all the language skills except writing are in line with expectations. Most students, including those of lower attainment, have sound comprehension of native speakers on tape and of their teachers' instructions in the foreign language. Some have good accent and pronunciation. Few, however, can speak with any fluency beyond the specific requirements of the GCSE syllabus. The quality of written work is not as good as expected. Few students write confidently in continuous prose in the foreign language using a variety of tense and idiom.

135. At Post 16 level students' attainment is well in line with expectations, responding well to the heightened challenge of A Level and the lively teaching they receive. Year 13 students, although reluctant speakers of French or German, write competently and understand the language spoken at native speed. Those studying a language in Year 12 have made a strong start and have good independent study habits.

136. The modern foreign languages curriculum is broad and open of access, offering three European languages and giving students the opportunity of studying two of them from the age

of eleven to GCSE and beyond. The well subscribed programme of visits and exchanges to all three European countries provides excellent opportunities for cultural, social and linguistic enrichment. Staff are highly professional and hard working, willingly taking on much beyond their classroom commitments. They have supported each other well through the long run of staff absences and are now a united and harmonious team. The current shortage of a foreign language specialist in the department, however, is having a serious impact on the attainment of students who are affected by it. The suited accommodation is good and has some very striking displays of students' work. Some rooms used by members of the department, however, are too small to accommodate large classes comfortably and in a few cases part time staff have to teach in non specialist rooms far from the department base. This discourages good communications and the regular use of audio-visual equipment.

137. The department is efficiently managed and its procedures are clearly documented, though its policies on marking, reading and the use of ICT would benefit from a fresh look. Most of the reservations expressed in the last report have been put right. In view of the department's strong leadership and its shared commitment to raising standards, it is very well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

138. In recent years all students taking GCSE music have achieved a grade between A* and G. The percentage of students achieving grades A*-C, however, has fluctuated from well above average to well below. In the GCSE examination in 2000, half of students taking the examination achieved grades A*-C. This was better than the previous year when 35% of students achieved grades A*-C. In the previous two years, results were well above average for grades A*-C. As at the last inspection there are relatively small numbers of students taking the examination so that comparisons with national averages are insecure. The music department has an open access policy at GCSE allowing students who wish to take the subject to do so, irrespective of prior attainment and experience. Some of the more able musicians choose to continue their musical studies through instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities and opt not to do the GCSE examination. Many of these students attain high standards in instrumental and theory of music examinations. Two students took A Level in 2000 and both achieved an A grade.

139. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is above average. Students in Year 7 can perform rhythm complexes successfully in groups. In Year 8 they can sing in two parts, maintaining both with reasonable intonation and an awareness of the need to listen to each other. Students in Year 9 can perform music from South America, maintaining the strong swing of syncopation in their performances and using a good variety of instruments. Individual improvisations in between the riffs are mostly tentative, but momentum is maintained successfully.

140. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment was at least average in the lessons seen. In Year 11, student's show that they have a good level of musical knowledge. They can recognise different vocal styles and use musical vocabulary confidently to describe them. Their compositions are well constructed, some are imaginative, exploiting more recent compositional techniques and showing a subtle use of motive and its development. In Year 10 compositions on a chord sequence are promising. Students use a good variety of styles and instruments.

141. In the sixth form, the standard of work is average. Only one student in each year is taking AS or A Level. Aural work is competent and written work is satisfactory.

142. Teaching is very good at all levels. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and as musical practitioners this is supported by quality practical skills. Students as a result acquire good knowledge and understanding and through practice they acquire good practical skills. There is good, often very good challenge in lessons and in extra curricular activities as teachers make demands on their students, not necessarily through the difficulty of task but in the quest for high standards of performance and refinement of composition. As a result students make good and sometimes very good mental, physical and creative effort in performing and composing. The pace of their work is always appropriate to the task, especially when building complex performing skills. In a Year 9 lesson, students persevered with percussion work as they built up the rhythms of the samba as a class. Very useful word rhythms, and excellent demonstrations from the teacher assisted students here. Here, as in all other lessons, students with special needs are well supported. They make good progress and achieve as successfully as other students. Teachers use a very good range of appropriate methods in lessons, including some individual work for composition - group and class work are used particularly to develop confidence in performance. Teachers manage their students very well and they behave in an exemplary manner. Very good relationships are fostered. Care and respect for each other are part of the culture of the music lesson. Since the last inspection teachers have put in place a satisfactory assessment procedure. Students are encouraged to reflect on their activities in some lessons, but this needs to be extended to all lessons at every level so that students develop a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in terms of performing, composing and listening. Formalised target setting is not yet a feature of the music assessment. Lessons are planned very well and time and resources are used appropriately. The department has one computer work station, which is used especially at Key Stage 4 for composition. There is need for more computers to enable a greater sophistication in composition, particularly at Key Stage 3. There has been an improvement in the provision of books to support A Level work and good use is made of the Internet for the A Level project and report. Large classrooms provide good flexible space but there are insufficient small rooms to accommodate instrumental lessons and small group work at the same time. Time allocated for the subject at Key Stage 3 is now sufficient and regular.

143. Students' attitudes to music are very good and often excellent. This is evident in all lessons, in good quality instrumental lessons and in the range and quality of extra curricular activities. There is commitment, energy and enjoyment pervading all musical activities. Concerts in college and in the community provide a rich social and cultural experience for everyone.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Overall standards of attainment are above average.

145. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards of personal fitness and skill in most activities are above the national average. In dance and gymnastics most girls demonstrate good body awareness and are quick to follow routines or sequences with accuracy and control in their movements. The level of knowledge and understanding seen in rugby is well above average and when combined with considerable skill and strength enables many boys to play the game to a good standard. Within the key stage there is further clear evidence of high standards of fitness amongst both boys and girls in basketball and netball. By the end of Key Stage 4 there has been consolidation of skills and standards of personal fitness are sustained. Many students show a well-developed knowledge of the components of physical fitness and a clear understanding of how to improve and sustain performance as a result of regular healthy

exercise. In examination classes the standard of work seen in folders is impressive and indicates that the current cohort of students will reverse the most recent fall in overall results. Many students working towards A Level examinations have already compiled folders in which the standards of written answers are well above average. Work is accurate, thoughtful and detailed and often very well presented using ICT skills to produce good quality text and supporting graphics. Many Ullswater Community College students and teams become high achievers competing at district, county and national level and have considerable success in many activities.

146. The high standards reached in physical education are the direct result of very high standards of teaching combined with a most mature and positive approach from students. All teachers are very strong in their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of activities. The teaching of examination classes is very good. Teachers work in an engaging and enthusiastic manner consistently setting tasks that challenge students to improve. The degree of challenge together with realistically high expectations of the students is a feature of all lessons and provides a good environment for learning. Students know what to do in order to improve and are eager to work hard as individuals, in pairs, or in groups to reach the targets set. They enjoy their work and almost always devote and sustain high levels of concentration and effort over long periods of time. Excellent use is made of students' personal experiences and knowledge, particularly in theory lessons. By drawing on this teachers expertly establish and sustain student involvement in learning. The working relationships between students and their teachers are excellent. Overall the quality of teaching is always good, often very good, and occasionally outstanding – a clear strength within the college.

147. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met at both Key Stages 3 and 4. The college provides a very broad and well-balanced curriculum across all years. The extra-curricular programme is both extensive and impressive in providing a remarkable range of activities for all ages and abilities, making very effective use of the long lunch-break. The clubs, competitions and fixtures would not be possible without the commitment and ability of the physical education specialists together with enthusiastic support of other staff.

148. The leadership provided by the head of department is a clear strength. In addition to the efficient and effective way in which the department is managed on a day-to-day basis, proper attention has been given to the planning and implementation of well-considered policies and practices. There is leadership by example and considerable emphasis on teamwork that draws on the skills and enthusiasm of well-qualified staff. The specialist accommodation for PE is, overall, very good. The indoor spaces are always very clean and made even more attractive by use of appropriate displays and information. Outdoors, well-used pitches sometimes suffer from over-use and the hire charges of adjacent sports facilities are expensive for the college and its students. The department is well provided for in apparatus and equipment but students following examination courses are required to buy their own textbooks.

149. Since the last inspection this department has continued to make progress. Overall standards are now consistently above average. Results over the four years to 1999 in GCSE examinations have shown an upward trend ahead of national averages for A*-C grades and at A Level. The quality of teaching is consistently very strong. The balance achieved in lessons between teaching and learning is much improved with all students given sufficient opportunity to work independently, take responsibility in their learning and offer appropriate, evaluative comment on their own performance and that of others. More recently the difference in examination performance between boys and girls has become much more significant and the department is now quite rightly considering changes to the programmes of study and teaching styles, in order to address this.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. There has been improvement in the provision for religious education. Effective learning takes place in lessons and students respect and value the opportunities for learning and for their personal development that these lessons afford. Opportunities, however, are still too limited and lack of time is affecting standards although the subject makes a strong contribution to all areas of personal development and has initiated some of the college's generous responses to charity.

151. In the first three years the time given is slightly below the minimum time allocation recommended by the Cumbria Agreed Syllabus, and is less than the time given to other humanities subjects. Consequently students learn well in lessons but overall are limited in the depth and detail of their knowledge and understanding, particularly on religions other than Christianity. Students with special needs are well cared for in lessons and progress as well as others.

152. In Key Stage 4 the time given to religious studies within the carousel of PSHE lessons is well below the recommended time. Progress is also affected by the lack of continuous teaching recommended by the local syllabus for effective learning. Standards are poor for those following the general lessons in Years 10 and 11 as so little of the local syllabus requirements is covered.

153. Within the modules studied learning is largely through discussion. This requires skilled teaching - good standards of understanding were achieved in a Year 11 lesson on the 'just war'. Students were challenged to think hard. They were thoroughly engaged by the topic and enjoying the lesson. It was clear they believed it was important to have opportunities to explore ethical issues and to reflect on their own beliefs in a mature way. In Year 10 students were not so well engaged and did not make so much progress.

154. Standards are good for the students taking GCSE Religious Studies. Numbers are low and there was no group last year. Based on the last results and on the work seen in Years 10 and 11 it is clear that students generally do well in relation to their abilities. Some thorough and thoughtful work was seen in books with detail and understanding appropriate to the full range of GCSE grades. In both years students respond well to good teaching. They are keen to answer questions, work well throughout the lessons and do their homework conscientiously.

155. In the sixth form there is no provision for religious education. Legal requirements are still not met for students over the age of fourteen.

156. Teaching in both key stages takes good account of learning from religion as well as learning about it. Consequently students are able to reflect and consider some of the ultimate questions of life, its meaning and purpose, as well as to gain knowledge of Christianity and an introduction to other world religions. In a Year 7 lesson students were enjoying learning about the philosophical approach to religious studies of the Cumbria Agreed Syllabus. The lesson was pitched well. Students considered a story that made them choose between being a 'contented pig' or a 'dissatisfied philosopher' who asks questions about life. In Year 9 they were learning to weigh arguments about the existence of God. In both lessons their understanding progressed well. Teaching is mainly good. In several very good lessons class management was particularly strong and discussion conducted well to encourage a thoughtful response from students. Teachers make lesson aims clear and focus attention

on the key concepts.

157. Since the last report sound schemes of work have been drawn up in line with local requirements as well as a framework to assess attainment at the age of fourteen. These give good guidance to teachers. There is no head of department at present - the faculty leader currently gives very good support which is particularly important as the teachers are largely not specialists and most have other responsibilities. The department urgently requires a well-qualified subject leader as well as specialist teaching. Resources are adequate although books have to be shared in some lessons. Good in-house resources are produced to supplement books. The curriculum should be enriched by visits and by links with local faith communities. There is also scope for more imaginative activities including the use of artefacts in lessons and for display. Assessment schemes have begun well but need further development. The use of ICT should be further integrated into teaching.

158. Many new books have been purchased recently to compensate for the previous paucity of books in this subject. This is an important improvement. They are well chosen but the number is still barely adequate especially as books are the main stimulus when lessons do not take place in the RE room. The library supports learning well.

POST 16 EDUCATION, INCLUDING BUSINESS STUDIES AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

159. Positive and effective leadership help the specialist staff of the business studies department to work well together and to provide a growing range of successful Key Stage 4 and Post 16 programmes. Both the Key Stage 4 GCSE business studies and office application courses are very successful. In the recent GCSE examinations, these produced some of the highest A*-C and A*-G attainment in the college, with above average performance when compared with the latest available national statistics continuing the upward trend of the previous two years. These two programmes also make a significant contribution to the development of ICT skills in the curriculum. The department analyses its results carefully and has had recent success in dealing with possible under achievement by boys. In 2000, boys did marginally better than girls in business studies, reversing the 1999 picture where there was a significant gap in the attainment of boys and girls. In office applications, the previous difference in attainment between the genders was closed dramatically. Girls continued to do slightly better than the boys but only just. The success of students in Key Stage 4 encourages many to continue with general vocational education when they move into Post 16 studies.

160. Vocational and business programmes are a major component in the Post 16 curriculum provision and have attracted half of the current Year 12 cohort. Intermediate and Advanced VCE and GNVQ courses in business, health and social care, leisure and recreation/tourism and the new Intermediate hospitality and catering are the main components in this vocationally orientated curriculum. Students can blend these programmes with academic courses, although currently only a few do so. The well-organised Diploma and Certificate in childcare and education further extend choice by providing students with occupational training directly linked to integrated practical experience.

161. The quality of teaching is largely good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Aims and objectives are clearly stated at the start of the lessons but their achievement is not always specifically reviewed with the students at the end. All lessons are well planned and usually paced appropriately. The teachers give clear explanations, even when they do not

necessarily have specialist knowledge of some topics in the syllabus specifications. Sometimes teachers rely too much on exposition and miss opportunities to exploit the 'learning by experience' spirit of GNVQ. Even so, some good developmental teaching takes place, as in a lesson about how to construct demand curves and use them as an analytical tool. The best lessons provided case studies and realistic work-based scenarios to challenge students to develop theories and perceptions as a basis for active dialogue with the teacher and each other. Most Post 16 students in this college have part time employment, a resource that could be exploited more vigorously in the learning process. In the childcare courses students draw readily on their integrated work experience to exemplify theory in practice and this adds real vocational significance to their learning.

162. Standards of attainment in Post 16 vocational programmes are good. Results over recent years are above national figures, with very good completion rates and a significant number of GNVQ Merit and Distinction awards. Current attainment in lessons and in portfolio evidence is in line with expectations for the respective courses. Students are committed and work hard, showing an increasing ability to organise their own research and to take responsibility for their own learning. In A Level business studies, the small group of Year 13 students are working hard on business investigations and the quality of outcomes is generally sound or better.

163. The vocational co-ordinator is very effective in maintaining consistency across the GNVQ/VCE vocational areas. There are good operational routines to ensure compliance with the quality requirements of the vocational examination board. A very positive team approach based on a commitment to vocational education, gives vocational education equal status within the curriculum. The childcare programmes are not yet integrated fully into this vocational management structure and team. This should be considered since the occupational programmes have much good practice to share, particularly in relation to practical assessment and use of work experience to support classroom based theory. Mapping the common elements in the respective GNVQ/VCE specifications would improve opportunities to utilise specialist expertise economically across vocational areas. There is a very good blend of academic and vocational programmes which offer opportunities for most students across the full range of ability in the college and attract 64% of the previous Year 11 cohort. Mature students join these programmes as part of the community education provision. The well designed and attractive prospectus sets out the range of courses clearly, illustrating how students can blend vocational and academic opportunities to maintain future career choice. The flexibility offered by the new examination specifications is used imaginatively. Key skills enhancement programmes in GCSE English, mathematics and office applications provide complementary studies in essential skills. Students with severe learning difficulties study modules from the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' scheme. This provision for students with special needs is exemplary. Extension programmes in community service, young enterprise and community sports leaders award, linked to a very large range of extra curricular activities, provide senior students with the chance to show initiative, take responsibility and contribute to college and community life. Many seize this opportunity and younger students benefit accordingly. Students with profound learning difficulties are heavily involved in this area of work. They run a regular lunchtime club for senior citizens and last year formed a highly successful Young Enterprise team.

164. Some of the teaching groups are small, part of the price of such comprehensive provision. Even so, Post 16 education is largely cost-effective, operating with only a small direct subsidy from the pre-16 college curriculum. There are some problems where classes are too large, for example in A Level biology and in art. In art single periods do not provide sufficient time for practical work.

165. The college manages the transition from Key Stage 4 very well. Well planned and imaginative induction arrangements in July, are followed by a residential conference in September at Lancaster University. This, together with effective counselling and guidance which is a strength of academic and pastoral support in the college, helps most students adjust quickly. They have good support from the Post 16 pastoral team and despite accommodation pressures in a student common room that is too small there is a sense of social unity. Students are largely content and speak highly of the support they receive through established formal review procedures and informal personal academic guidance provided by many subject staff in their spare time. The quality of student/teacher relations is a strength, strongly endorsed by observation of lessons and conversation with students. A well-established sense of community encourages success by broadening horizons, raising expectations and promoting good progress into higher education or employment.

166. Teaching in the non-National Curriculum A Level courses in sociology, government and politics, psychology and general studies is at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers demonstrate a confident command of the subject. Although some lessons rely too much on lecture technique, the best lessons contain a good balance of presentation and group activities which encourage student response and participation. This is particularly the case in general studies and sociology in which judicious use of video material and role play techniques challenge students to think critically and encourage appreciation of the complex issues involved. Standards of attainment in lessons are in line with national expectations for the respective courses and the overall success rate in previous years is generally above average when compared with national statistics. In 2000, the average points scores were particularly good in sociology and general studies.

167. Post 16 education benefits from the enthusiasm and commitment of the head of Post 16 studies who gives very positive leadership to an effective team of form tutors. She works very co-operatively with members of the college leadership team who are also heavily involved with the Post 16 recruitment and subsequent student guidance programme. The workload is heavy and growing, reflecting the increase in the number of Post 16 students seeking entry to higher education.