

INSPECTION REPORT

COOMBESHEAD COLLEGE

Coombeshead Road, Newton Abbot

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113522

Principal: Richard Haigh

Reporting inspector: John Rowley
No. 18648

Dates of inspection: 2.10.2000 – 5.10.2000

Inspection number: 223983

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-19
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Carol Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	5.2.1996 - 9.2.1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Coombeshead College is a community comprehensive school with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. It draws students from Newton Abbot, surrounding villages and, increasingly, from other parts of South Devon. There has been a substantial increase in student numbers since the time of the last inspection. The college, which is oversubscribed, is much larger than other comprehensive schools with 1500 students of whom 270 are sixth formers. Most of the sixth formers started at Coombeshead in Year 7, but a growing number are joining the sixth form from other schools.

The college has a comprehensive intake with students of all abilities. The average level of attainment of students entering Year 7 is very close to the national average. Students come from a variety of social backgrounds. The number of students entitled to free school meals is about one in eight, which is broadly average for secondary schools. The proportion of students on the special educational needs register is below average, but the number of students with statements (25) is broadly in line. Less than one per cent of students are not from a white UK background. This is much lower than the national average, but not untypical for the local area.

Nearly all teaching of students from 11 to 16 takes place on the main college site. There is a separate Post-16 centre (College House) although some specialist teaching for A-level and vocational courses takes place on the main site. Some boys' physical education takes place on a third site and a small amount of teaching takes place on a fourth site, which is shared with another school.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Coombeshead College is a very good school with many strengths and some outstanding features. Student achievements are good and their attitudes, values and personal development are very good. These achievements are a reflection of very good teaching, excellent pastoral systems and outstanding leadership and management, particularly by the principal. The college has made good progress since the time of the last inspection and provides very good value for money.

What the college does well

- The college provides very good teaching which results in good levels of achievement.
- An atmosphere of care and respect for the individual pervades the college and leads to very good student attitudes, values and personal development.
- Outstanding leadership provides vision and direction for the college.
- The inclusive approach to planning and review leads to a shared vision and a continuous drive for improvement.
- Provision and standards in the performing arts are exceptionally good.

What could be improved

- Whilst there has been substantial recent progress, provision and standards in information and communication technology are not yet satisfactory.
- Existing ways for identifying and sharing good practice need to be universally adopted so that the excellent models in teaching and learning are understood and used by all.
- The college should plan explicitly for how all the different elements of the curriculum can make the best contribution to students' learning and personal development.

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 February 1996. The many strengths identified at that time have been at least maintained and have generally been improved on. The college has monitored its progress and directed resources and expertise towards improving standards, both academic and social. Since 1996, there has been a significant improvement in test and examination performance which has exceeded the national rate of improvement. There has been a substantial improvement in the amount of teaching that is good or better and the areas of weakness in teaching identified in the last inspection have been addressed. The sixth form, which was a new development in 1996, is well established and is a major strength of the college.

Progress on the key issues identified in the last inspection report has been generally good, but uneven. There have been substantial improvements in the college's accommodation and the related health and safety issues have been resolved, nevertheless the college still has some accommodation problems. Nearly all pre-16 teaching now takes place on the main site and new building has improved provision, particularly in technology. Target setting and academic monitoring are much improved. Whilst there have been improvements in punctuality and attendance, these have not improved as fast as other aspects of the college. Although there have been significant recent improvements, provision for information and communication technology remains an issue. The college is still failing to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

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	C	C	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	C	

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

NB The inspection took place early in the autumn term 2000. This was before the official publication of the college's verified examination results for 2000 or comparative information on schools nationally. Therefore, the 2000 results are not included in the above chart or in the data in Part C of this report. However, the college's official GCSE results will certainly be above the national average and those of similar schools and the results may be well above average. A-level results will probably remain in line with national averages.

The achievement of Coombeshead College students of all abilities is good at all stages of their education. From their different starting points, they make good progress through Key Stage 3 to reach standards that are now above the national average in the SAT tests at the end of Year 9. The above average GCSE results also represent good achievement for students whose average attainment in Year 7 and Year 9 was in line with that found nationally. In recent years, the college's GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than the national rate of improvement. For the 2000 examinations, the college agreed with the local education authority a challenging target for 50% of students to gain higher grade GCSEs in five subjects. The college exceeded this target with 56% of students passing five or more higher grades. Whilst overall A-level results are in line with national averages, this represents good 'added value' when individual students' performances are compared to their GCSE results. The college has an open policy to the sixth form and does well to raise overall standards to the average of other institutions that do not always have such comprehensive sixth forms. Student achievement on vocational courses is very good.

In recent years, boys' performance has been in line with national averages at 14 and 16 whilst girls' performance has been above average. The gap between boys and girls has been greater than that found in most schools and this has been an issue for attention. However, the gap was much reduced in test and examination results for 2000 and was less than the national difference. The college has focussed on the issue of raising boys' achievement and recognises in its development plan that this is an area for continued focus to ensure that recent improvements are maintained.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Very good. Students like coming to college and support for the range of activities that the college provides is very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. With few exceptions, students behave very well in classrooms and around the college.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students are given, and accept, opportunities to take responsibility and have good relationships with one another, teachers and other adults.
Attendance	Average. Attendance by the great majority of students is good, but a small number of persistent absentees and the number of families who take their holidays during the term time reduce the overall attendance figures to the national level.

Students have a high opinion of the college and its staff. Through the student council and other less formal methods, they take an active part in day-to-day life and organisation and feel strongly that it is 'their' college. They feel valued as individuals and respond to the atmosphere of care and respect which is a very strong feature. Whilst they can be rather passive in some lessons, they nearly always work well, answer questions and are constructive in groups. In the very few classes where behaviour is inappropriate, the college's approach to discipline ensures that the issues are addressed. The college has had no permanent, and very few fixed period, exclusions in recent times reflecting the success of early intervention strategies and the work of the Junction Youth Centre. Student commitment and involvement in many activities in and out of lessons, most notably in the performing arts, are very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	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.

Of the 77 lessons observed during the inspection week:

- 8% were excellent
- 31% were very good or better
- 75% were good or better
- 99% were satisfactory or better

The overall quality of teaching is very good. The amount of satisfactory or better teaching and good or better teaching is greater than that found in most schools and results in generally high standards of student learning. Standards of teaching are strongest in examination classes. The quality of teaching is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There is very good teaching in all subject areas. There is some good practice in the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, but there are inconsistencies between teachers and subjects. Particularly strong features of the best teaching include: teachers' knowledge of, and evident enthusiasm for, their subjects; good use of pair and group work to provide mutual support and challenge and skilful use of questioning to draw out and deepen students' understanding. In the best lessons students are made to be active learners.

Teachers have high expectations for all students. There is an assumption that all can succeed with appropriate challenge and help. For example, work for lower attaining students and those with special

needs is structured so that they are able to reach high levels and they are encouraged to do so through a careful balance between praise and pressure. In subjects such as music, drama, food technology and textiles, 'professional' standards are expected and these are used in evaluating students' work.

Whilst very nearly always satisfactory, some teaching lacks imagination. In these lessons, students are content to be 'spoon-fed', the teacher works harder than the students and student initiative is limited. It is important that the best models of teaching are shared by all.

Whilst there are exceptions, the use of information and communication technology in teaching is limited and, where it is employed, the potential it offers to support student learning is not always fully exploited.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and well balanced and, with the exception of information and communication technology, meets statutory requirements. The amount of physical education for most students in Key Stage 4 is below current guidelines.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Statutory requirements are met. Students are generally well supported although classroom assistants are not always as well used as they could be.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Moral and social development are areas of strength. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory overall, but are not approached consistently and some opportunities are missed.
How well the college cares for its students	Very good. Personal support and guidance for students are excellent.

Guided options ensure that all students continue with a broad range of subjects to 16. Whilst still developing, the college provides a wider range of choices after 16 than in most similar sized sixth forms. The breadth of the curriculum allows for students of all interests and aptitudes. Curriculum provision for the performing arts is exceptional. The college has very strong links with primary and higher education aiding curriculum continuity. It makes excellent use of links with the community to support students' learning, for example through involving native speakers in foreign language teaching.

Whilst the college has made substantial recent progress with provision for information and communication technology, it is some distance from meeting curriculum requirements. The amount of time devoted to physical education in Key Stage 4 is half the recommended level. A weekly extension period is used to enrich the curriculum. At best, the activities are innovative and exciting, but the quality varies and the extension period is not always used as it could be.

There is limited explicit planning for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The shared ethos of the college is such that moral and social development are, nevertheless, very well catered for. There are some excellent examples of the college enriching students' knowledge and experience of their own cultural traditions and a few examples of students being encouraged to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures. However, not all opportunities are taken. Spiritual development is patchy. It is well supported through some teaching in Religious Education and other subjects, but is not consistently promoted. The college does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship and, when assemblies do take place, they could do more to contribute to spiritual development.

The college has a distinctive approach to pastoral care with a central team that has responsibility for advising students on personal matters ranging from emotional difficulties to careers. There is another

team of senior staff that deals with discipline issues. This allows tutors to concentrate on monitoring and improving academic performance and, in the words of the principal, 'for the majority of teachers to spend the majority of their time teaching the majority of the students'. Whilst the pastoral system has only been in place for three years and is still developing, it is a great strength of the college.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Excellent. The leadership of the principal is outstanding and he is very well supported by an excellent senior management team and other staff with leadership and management responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors know the college well, hold it to account for the standards achieved and provide clear educational direction.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. In most respects, the college has a clear idea of its strengths and weaknesses. However, the best practice in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning is not applied consistently.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Appropriate educational priorities are very well supported through careful financial management and planning. The principles of 'best value' are understood and applied. The college provides very good value for money.

One of the main reasons for the recent successes of the college is the outstanding leadership provided by its senior managers and governors, and especially by the principal. Together, they have developed a very strong vision of the college that they would like. This has created an ethos which permeates all aspects of the college's work and puts students and their achievements first.

A particular strength of leadership and management in the college is the open and collaborative approach to decision making. A well developed planning cycle involves all sections of the college community in monitoring and evaluating performance, determining priorities and targets, and planning for their achievement. There is a climate of trust in which all feel free to reflect critically on what they can do to improve learning and an exceptional unity of purpose and 'ownership' in the college's vision.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college's improving standards and the academic and personal progress of their children. • The expectation of hard work. • The quality of the college staff. • The way in which the college cares for their children and provides a safe environment. • The attitudes and values that the college promotes. • Standards and provision in the performing arts. • The information provided to parents, the way in which the college works with parents and how concerns and complaints are addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of parents would like to see improvements in some aspects of the college's accommodation. • A significant number of parents would like to see improved provision for information and communication technology. • Some parents would like to see more consistency in the amount and regularity of homework set. • A small number of parents are dissatisfied with the sensitivity with which their concerns or complaints are dealt.

In the main, the inspection team agrees with the parents' views of the college. The college has many strengths. Whilst there have been recent improvements, some aspects of accommodation and information and communication technology remain areas of concern. There have been inconsistencies in the way, in which homework has been set, resulting in uneven expectations and workloads for individual students, although this is improving. The great majority of parents are happy with the way in which their concerns and complaints are addressed, but it is regrettable that not all parents share this experience and the college has recognised this as an area for review.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE COLLEGE DOES WELL

The college provides very good teaching which results in good levels of achievement.

1. Students of all abilities and all ages make good academic progress and the main reason for this is that they are generally very well taught and sometimes their teaching is excellent.
2. Students make good progress as they go through the college. This can be seen in their performance in tests, assessments, and examinations and was confirmed during the inspection week through lesson observations, discussions and the sampling of students' work.
3. The average attainment of students when they start in Year 7 is close to that found nationally but, by the end of Year 9, the most recent tests and teacher assessments show good achievement, with results that are above the national average. All abilities are making real advances, particularly in the core areas of literacy and numeracy.
4. Good student progress continues through Key Stage 4 leading to GCSE results which are above the national average and well above those of similar schools. In relation to their potential, students of all abilities achieve well at GCSE. Whilst there are some variations between results in different subjects, the consistency of performance across the curriculum is a notable feature.
5. Students who stay at Coombeshead after the age of 16 and those who join from other schools make further good progress through the sixth form to achieve results in A-level and vocational courses that are very good in relation to what their GCSE results would have suggested.
6. One reason for the students' achievements is that their teachers have a clear idea of their different starting points, a good understanding of how to move them forward and high expectations of what they can achieve. Teachers generally make good use of assessment information and have detailed knowledge of national curriculum and examination requirements leading to individual and group target setting. This is a notable improvement, under the leadership of the vice principal, of an area identified as a weakness in the last inspection.
7. Careful planning results in teaching strategies that meet individual needs. For example, the mathematics department works closely with contributory schools that have introduced the National Numeracy strategy and has used this liaison to establish the strengths and weakness of students' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. They have adjusted their schemes of work to take account of this knowledge. As students move through the college their understanding is continually checked. Teachers provide additional resource materials and approaches to solving mathematical problems which give support or further challenge as appropriate. Consequently, there have been substantial improvements in mathematics results in recent years.
8. Another very strong aspect of teaching is the way in which teachers demonstrate excellent knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, their subject and start from an assumption that students will share it. In the best lessons, teachers model ways of working and demonstrate what can be achieved. An example of this was seen in a food and nutrition class. The lesson was conducted in an exceptionally well designed teaching area. Every available display space was used to present stimulus material or celebrate student achievement through photographs, letters and examples of work. 'Celebrity cooks' and the work of top restaurants were presented as role models and students were encouraged to communicate with them through letters and Email. The room and activities were organised to mirror a professional working environment with mass production processes explained and very high standards of hygiene set. The teacher's introduction was precise and there was continuous reinforcement to ensure that all would work towards a quality end product. The teacher demonstrated cooking methods and his explanation struck a careful balance between everyday language and the explicit teaching and consolidation of specialist vocabulary. This excellent

teaching created an atmosphere in which achievement was not so much an expectation, but an assumption.

9. Good student achievement is also a reflection of generally very good working relationships between teachers and students. In most lessons, there is an atmosphere of collaborative enterprise and trust where students feel confident about their work and the support and respect they will receive when they seek help. These relationships also create an environment in which academic challenges can be presented without threat whilst creative thinking and student initiative and independence are developed. These very good working relationships are a very strong feature across the college. They were particularly evident in many A-level and sixth form vocational studies, but were also seen in lessons throughout the age and ability range. One very good example was in a Year 9 geography lesson on volcanoes. The low attaining class had little subject knowledge to start and limited graphical and literacy skills, but by the end of the lesson they had a good understanding of the central features of volcanoes; were using technical terms accurately and had completed exercises which initially appeared to be beyond them. This was a direct consequence of outstanding teaching. The work was carefully structured and stepped, difficulties were anticipated and overcome through 'helpful hints' and the availability of writing frames. The students were constantly praised, but never patronised and always encouraged to do more. Words such as *'That is a very good try ... so you were meaning ... now can anyone take that idea further ... This is a hard one, but we will take it on ... I really think that we can do this'* reflected an attitude of care and challenge. The same mix of praise and challenge within a supportive environment was seen to be just as effective in moving forward the highest ability students in Year 11 lessons in English, science and religious education.

An atmosphere of care and respect for the individual pervades the college and leads to very good student attitudes, values and personal development.

10. During the inspection it became very clear from parental responses; many formal and informal discussions with students, staff and governors; observations of lessons and the work of the college; and a study of policies and procedures, that an atmosphere of care and respect pervades the college. The way in which the students are treated inside and outside of lessons is as much a reflection of the college's ethos and culture as any particular aspect of the pastoral system.
11. With few exceptions, students are keen to come to the college and, justifiably, feel that they are valued as individuals in a secure, inclusive environment which puts them first. Their personal and academic development are taken very seriously and are the benchmarks against which the college measures itself. As a result of their treatment, students have generally very good attitudes towards the college, behave very well, and have good relationships with one another, teachers and other adults.
12. Over the last three years, the college has developed a distinctive approach to pastoral care which has been very successful in creating a framework for student care and discipline. 'Student Services' are a central team which provide high quality care and advice. They run a confidential, open-access service for all students and are very highly regarded by students, staff and parents. A particular strength of Student Services is the way in which they work closely with different agencies to address issues ranging from child protection to careers guidance. Another central team deals with poor behaviour. It is seen as being firm, but fair and does much to consolidate the good behaviour observed in lessons and around the college. In co-operation with others, they have ensured that the frequency of fixed period and permanent exclusions is very low. The creation of central teams has removed some of the traditional roles of form tutors and allowed them to focus on academic progress. In addition to group tutorials, each student has two individual target setting interviews a year. The net effect of these strategies is that students are clear about what is expected of them, feel that their work and behaviour are closely monitored and that, even within a very large college, they are recognised as individuals.

Outstanding leadership provides vision and direction for the college.

13. One of the main reasons for the recent successes of the college is the outstanding leadership provided by its senior managers and governors and especially by the principal.
14. The principal was appointed to the college shortly after the last OFSTED inspection in 1996. At that time it was described as 'a good school with some notable features'. In four years the principal has built on this good foundation and led the college to the position of being 'a very good school with many strengths and some outstanding features'; a significant advance. During that time, test and examination performance has improved at a faster rate than the national trend and there has been a substantial improvement in the quality of teaching. Pastoral systems have been restructured to good effect and there have been big improvements in accommodation and finance. Whilst these developments are a credit to the whole school community, the principal has had the central role. The changes reflect his vision for the college; his depth of understanding of national and international educational developments; his ability to think creatively and laterally; and his skill in motivating and inspiring others. In taking the college forward, he has the confidence, support and respect of the staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and has, in the words of one of his team leaders, created '*a sense of excitement about the future and a feeling that this is a good place to work*'. He leads by example as a very good classroom teacher and contributor to extra-curricular activities.
15. The principal's style of leadership is open and collaborative. He is well supported by an excellent senior management team who have complementary strengths and responsibilities, but also a co-operative approach in which they see themselves as a collective unit. Different views are sought and valued, critical reflection about ways to improve learning and develop effective ways of working is encouraged. Meetings are characterised by good humour and friendly relationships, but also a very frank exchange of views leading to an agreed way forward. Consequently, the college has a very clear picture of its strengths, what needs to be done to improve, how to do it and a clear set of priorities.
16. The governing body also provides excellent leadership. They set a clear agenda in their appointment of the principal and in their expectations of what he should achieve. Through their committee structures and many links with the staff, they know the college well, have clear processes for holding it to account and have shown a willingness to challenge when necessary. They support the work of the college as critical friends and, in nearly all respects, fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They are aware of, and are addressing, some points concerning their responsibilities for special educational needs. The governors are exceptionally well led by a chair of governors who has shown tremendous commitment to the school. In turn, she is very well supported by the vice chair of governors, other governors with specific responsibilities and an excellent clerk.

The inclusive approach to planning and review leads to a shared vision and a continuous drive for improvement.

17. In the college there is a very strong shared commitment to improvement and an exceptional sense of ownership of the college's vision. In formal and informal discussions during the inspection week, governors, staff and students, repeatedly talked about 'our' college and what 'we' are trying to do. Staff expressed their support for the changes that have been introduced and the leadership of the principal. The shared vision was evident in policies and practices across the college. This unity of purpose is a key reason why improvement strategies have been successful and is a direct result of the college's approach to planning.
18. A well developed planning cycle involves all sections of the college community in monitoring and evaluating performance, determining priorities and targets, and planning for their achievement. There is an acceptance that individuals and teams review their performance, set targets and plan for improvement. This planning and evaluation informs whole school priorities and staff at all levels commented on the extent to which they felt that their contributions were valued and that they could make a difference. The good practice means that the college is very well placed to implement the

new national requirements for performance management.

19. There is an ethos that encourages questioning and challenge. This comes from all sections of the school community – the governing body, the senior management, the policy group of curriculum leaders, all staff through the development planning process, students through the college council, the annual survey of student, staff and parent opinion etc. It is an open and collaborative approach to decision making. There is a climate of trust in which all feel free to reflect critically on what they can do to improve learning without recrimination.
20. A strength of the planning cycle is the integration between the planning for college improvement and financial planning. There is a clear distinction between maintenance and development budgets and all development planning is considered in terms of cost effective contributions to the strategic aims of the college.

Provision and standards in the performing arts are exceptionally good.

21. The performing arts have a high profile in the college and have been recognised as an area of great strength for some time. The interest, commitment and involvement of both staff and students are exemplary.
22. The quality of teaching in the performing arts is outstanding. For example, in one Year 11 drama lesson, students were seen to be totally committed, focussed and relishing the challenges of dramatic improvisation. They were unconditionally supportive of each other and took complete responsibility for developing their work. There was evident enthusiasm, excitement and enjoyment. All of this was a direct consequence of the teacher's exceptional dramatic skills, his dynamic presentation, excellent orchestration of the activities and the way in which students were constantly offered new challenges and ways of working. The same ambience and quality of teaching was seen in all drama lessons, regardless of the group or teachers. Similarly, music teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge; an ability to enthuse and inspire and very high expectations.
23. An exceptional range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities are offered to students outside of formal lessons. Whilst it was not possible to observe them during the inspection week, videos, reports and testimonies from many sources support a conclusion that the range, number and quality of performances are outstanding features of the college. Regular lunchtime and after school activities are also very well supported and the quality is very high. Listening to the choir, attended by 87 students at lunchtime was a real pleasure and the boys' dance group, led by an older girl student was a delight.
24. The college lacks a large performance area but, otherwise, resources and curriculum provision are excellent. These reflect the college's commitment to the performing arts, but also extensive and imaginative links with many outside bodies and companies.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The strengths of the college far outweigh the areas for improvement. These are all areas that have been recognised in the college's priorities.

Whilst there has been substantial recent progress, provision and standards in information and communication technology are not yet satisfactory.

25. The need to improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT) was identified as a key issue for action at the time of the last inspection. Unfortunately, improvements in ICT have not been as good as in other areas. Consequently, standards in ICT across the college are below those in other subjects, although there have been some good results from the fairly small number of students following examination courses. The use of ICT to aid student learning is uneven across the curriculum. National Curriculum requirements have not been met for all students.
26. The implementation of the college's ICT review described in the last inspection report was delayed for a variety of reasons: financial constraints, personnel issues and inflexible leasing arrangements. Consequently, at the time of this inspection the number of computers in the school was well below the national average and government expectations. Also, the way in which these computers are used is patchy. At best, their use in subjects is well planned to develop skills in ICT and improve knowledge and understanding of the subject, but this is not always the case.
27. The college is well aware of the deficiencies in ICT and has recently made substantial progress in this area. Improved finances have allowed a major investment in new technology, although the low starting point means that provision is not yet satisfactory. A recently produced ICT policy has introduced new management responsibilities for ICT and led to curriculum plans based on government guidelines. These plans should lead to National Curriculum requirement being met in Key Stage 3 and, in time, in Key Stage 4. The college has also embarked on a well structured ICT training plan for all staff using money from the New Opportunities Fund.

Existing ways for identifying and sharing good practice need to be universally adopted so that the excellent models in teaching and learning are understood and used by all.

28. The quality of teaching is very good overall and three quarters of teaching is good or better. However, the quality of teaching can still be improved and the college recognises that a fresh focus on teaching and learning should be central to the next stage of its development. It is important that all teaching should be raised to the standards of the best.
29. At the time of the inspection, there were a variety of formal and informal methods of identifying good practice in teaching and learning, but these sometimes reflected individual and team initiatives and were not always firmly rooted in the ethos of the college. Consequently, the excellent models in teaching and learning seen during the inspection week were not always understood and employed by all. For example, in some classrooms there was an assumption that students were passive learners who were not able to take the initiative and had to be 'spoon-fed'. The same students in other lessons were seen to be active learners who were able to take initiative and plan, complete and evaluate their own work. It is important that all members of staff understand the best strategies for achieving this end.
30. The best teaching described elsewhere in this report catered very well for the different abilities and styles of learning within the classroom. Whilst very nearly always satisfactory, some teaching methods were not so effective in doing this and sometimes lacked imagination. The college has recognised the need to further develop the range of teaching styles in some classrooms.

The college should plan explicitly for how all the different elements of the curriculum can make the best contribution to students' learning and personal development.

31. Whilst satisfactory, the way in which the curriculum is planned to maximise students' learning and personal development can be improved. Although there is a need to review the time allocated to different subjects and to decide whether 'best value' is being gained from these allocations, the main areas for improvement relate to aspects which run across the curriculum.
32. The college does not plan explicitly for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In spite of this, moral and social development are very good overall and spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. However, review and planning would allow improvements to be made, particularly in spiritual and cultural development. For example, some curriculum areas have given little consideration to how students' understanding of, and preparation for, life in a multicultural society can be developed.
33. The college has introduced a weekly 'extension period' to enrich the curriculum. This is an imaginative approach and, at best, it is used in innovative and exciting ways, but this is not always the case. Further developments are needed and the college should give careful consideration to whether this is the best use of curriculum time.
34. Similarly, the way in which the core skills of literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology are developed through subjects can be improved. There are good examples to build on, particularly in literacy, but there are inconsistencies between teachers and subjects. For example, variations in the expectation for written work and the teaching strategies used to develop it can result in the same students working at different levels in different classrooms. Issues regarding information and communication technology are highlighted elsewhere in the report.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

35. The statements contained in the box called 'WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED' on the second page of the summary of the report (page 6 of this document) indicate areas for improvement identified from the inspection. All of these areas for improvement have been recognised by the college. In order to bring about improvements in these areas, the college should do the following:
 - **Continue to improve provision and standards in information and communication technology.**
 - **Continue to improve the high quality of teaching and learning by implementing consistent approaches to monitoring, modelling and sharing good practice.**
 - **Further develop explicit planning for how the different elements of the curriculum can make the best contribution to students' learning and personal development.**

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	77
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8%	23%	43%	25%	1%	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	1230	270
Number of full-time students eligible for free college meals	156	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	25	0
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	221	0

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	5

Student mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	71
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	65

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8%
National comparative data	7.9%

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1%
National comparative data	1.1%

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	112	101	213

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	75	64
	Girls	66	60	53
	Total	126	135	117
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	59% (59%)	63% (58%)	55% (65%)
	National	63% (65%)	62% (59%)	55% (56%)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	18% (29%)	36% (35%)	15% (29%)
	National	28% (34%)	38% (36%)	23% (27%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	72	66
	Girls	84	60	57
	Total	162	132	123
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76% (61%)	62% (60%)	58% (65%)
	National	64% (65%)	64% (60%)	60% (56%)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	25% (35%)	27% (30%)	23% (28%)
	National	31% (35%)	37% (36%)	28% (27%)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	86	131	217

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	25	74	82
	Girls	85	124	129
	Total	110	198	211
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	51% (46%)	91% (92%)	97% (98%)
	National	46.3% (44.6%)	90.9% (90.7%)	95.7% (95.2%)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	41 (37.9)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	42
	National	n/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	28	44	72

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.9	15.4	14.8 (15.8)	5.7	2.9	4.2 (5)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.8)	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	School	25
	National	67%

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1425
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	10	0
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)	78
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	484

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.5%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3657522
Total expenditure	3634340
Expenditure per student	2528
Balance brought forward from previous year	4861
Balance carried forward to next year	28043

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1497
Number of questionnaires returned	606

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	36	53	7	3	3
My child is making good progress in college.	35	53	5	1	7
Behaviour in the college is good.	23	62	7	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	54	15	4	8
The teaching is good.	27	59	5	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	44	15	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	46	44	7	2	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	42	3	0	2
The college works closely with parents.	27	50	16	2	5
The college is well led and managed.	30	52	6	2	10
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	51	7	1	9
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	45	11	3	16

NB The larger than usual number of responses in the 'Don't Know' category were mainly from parents of Year 7 children who were in their first week at the new college at the time the questionnaire was sent out.