

INSPECTION REPORT

St Edward's College

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 131320

Headteacher: Mr J Waszek

Reporting inspector: M McLachlan
3654

Dates of inspection: 6 – 10 November 2000

Inspection number: 224027

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the College Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of School:	Comprehensive
College category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
College address:	Sandfield Park Liverpool Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Byrne

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Jane Beattie (11457)	Lay inspector		How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
Anne Hill (1195)	Team inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well are pupils or students taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?</p> <p>How well does the college care for its pupils or students?</p>
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Edward's College is an 11-18 co-educational Catholic voluntary aided comprehensive school. The college is the Cathedral Choir school for Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King and has recently been awarded Language College status. There are 960 pupils in total with 243 in the sixth form; this is about the same size as other secondary schools. Most pupils are from Liverpool although a number of pupils are drawn from across Merseyside. The majority of pupils are white with a small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, around 10 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs; including those with statements (two pupils), at 3.1 per cent is well below the national figures of 18.7 per cent. Over the last three years the college has changed from an independent selective school to a grant maintained school and is now a voluntary aided college. Attainment on entry is above average for a comprehensive school. There is a small but significant minority of pupils who enter the college with below average attainment. Thirty pupils are selected according to musical ability including the cathedral choristers.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

St Edward's College is a very effective college with many excellent features. Strong leadership by the principal with the full support of the governing body, senior staff, teachers and support staff has enabled the college to move very successfully through recent significant structural changes in buildings, curriculum and governance. Standards are very high throughout the college with pupils making significant progress. Teaching is good overall, with many very good and excellent features. The teachers' knowledge of their subject combined with their commitment both in and out of the classroom is a significant strength of the college, although teaching occasionally fails to capitalise on the pupils' capacity for independent and creative learning. The very good progress made by pupils has its roots in a complex chemistry of: pupils' excellent attitudes, high aspirations, commitment, hard work and sense of pride in belonging to the college; the parental support and confidence in the college; a shared ethos which promotes high standards in a caring, challenging but supportive environment; the quality of teaching; the totality of the educational experience on offer, including a vast array of extra-curricular activities which complements a traditional curriculum. The combination of all these features and the high standards attained by the pupils means the college gives good value for money.

What the college does well

- Establishes an excellent ethos in particular through the relationships between teaching, support staff and pupils and pupils with each other.
- Achieves very high standards of attainment and achievement in examinations, lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
- Provides excellent leadership by the principal who is well supported by the governing body, senior and middle managers.
- Provides good quality teaching with high expectations and care and support for all pupils.
- Fosters very good quality of learning: high pupils' aspiration, motivation, capacity for hard work and sense of pride and belonging to the college.
- Establishes excellent attitudes and behaviour and the very good personal development and attendance of the pupils.
- Provides very good art and design, history, music and physical education.
- Provides an excellent quality and range of extra-curricular activities that contributes significantly to the broader pupils' development.
- Makes excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- Makes very good provision for students in the sixth form and their preparation for further and higher education.
- Ensures the continued strength of the parents' support for the college.

What could be improved

- Improve teaching methods and curriculum provision to increase the range of opportunities and resources for pupils to develop their creative and independent learning skills within the curriculum.
- Establish consistency in the implementation of the recently developed whole college policies and initiatives.
- Improve the standard of attainment of students in information and communication technology and design and technology and the range of the curriculum in these two subjects.
- The governors need to ensure that statutory requirements are met in relation to curriculum provision in information and communication technology and design and technology and the assessment and reporting arrangements in Key Stage 3.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION:

The college has not previously been inspected.

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 colleges			Similar colleges
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A*	A	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A*	A*	

Key

Very high	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The performance in GCSE places the college in the highest five per cent compared with similar colleges and close to the top five per cent nationally. The average points score at A-level places the college in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Results in the Key Stage 3 tests are in the top five per cent of schools for the expected level and the higher levels. In 1999, the reporting year for this inspection, GCSE results in all subject areas were well above national averages and very high compared with other comprehensive colleges. A-level results were very high compared with national averages in all subjects apart from French, where they are in line, and Spanish where the results are well below national averages. When the inspection took place the national comparisons for the 2000 results were only just available. Results have improved and GCSE performance is now just in line with the top five per cent nationally. While there are variations in some subjects, results over time are consistently high and the overall trend is one of improvement. GCSE results had declined but have improved in 2000. Core subjects at Key Stage 3 have improved significantly, particularly mathematics and English where substantial numbers achieve the higher levels. The college sets itself ambitious targets compared with the expectations arising from prior attainment data and achieves these targets. Overall, attainment demonstrated in all subjects is high or very high apart from aspects of design and technology and information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 where they are average. Standards of attainment and levels of achievement in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils achievements are excellent in mathematics, very high in English, science, history, art and design, music, physical education, business studies and also in information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 where pupils' own experiences contribute considerably to their overall achievements. Pupils' achievements are high in other subjects and

satisfactory in modern foreign languages in the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Excellent: pupils are enthusiastic, interested and fully involved in academic, extra-curricular and social aspects of college life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent: behaviour is excellent within lessons, in extra-curricular activities and in particular in and around the college. This is a very safe and orderly community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: relationships between pupils and pupils and staff are excellent and all members of the college treat each other with respect and consideration. Pupils have ample opportunities to take initiative and responsibility within college life but this is sometimes limited in lessons.
Attendance	Very high: no unauthorised absence reported in 1999 and authorised absence was well below the national average.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a significant strength of the college. Within lessons attitudes and behaviour were judged to be good or better in 93 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 64 per cent of lessons. Relationships between all members of the college community, pupils, teachers and the support staff are excellent. The opportunities provided for pupils to take initiative and personal responsibility are many but some over directive teaching restricts opportunities for some pupils in lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	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 quality of teaching is a strength of the college. Ninety-five per cent of teaching was judged as satisfactory or better with 75 per cent good or better and 44 per cent very good or excellent. Five per cent of lessons (eight lessons) were judged unsatisfactory with the majority of these in Key Stage 3 although there was no particular pattern for this performance in subjects or classes. In the sixth form half of teaching was judged very good or better with 83 per cent good or better with no unsatisfactory teaching. The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good with many examples of very good teaching in all three subjects. Skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and pupils are able to use these skills effectively in all subject areas. Overall, within lessons, the needs of individual students are well met including those with special educational needs and those with particular gifts and talents.

Teachers' knowledge of their subjects, along with the high expectations they set, are significant strengths of teaching. The best teaching is seen in many subjects but consistently seen in art and design, history, music and physical education where teaching frequently stimulates pupils' thinking, avid interest and enthusiasm. Good teaching leads to many pupils reaching the highest levels in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and overall the pattern is similar in other subjects. Other talents are met through the excellent extra-curricular programme, particularly in sport and music. Pupils are keen and willing learners, they come to lessons ready and prepared, persevere when challenged and respond with avid interest and enthusiasm to excellent and very good teaching. When given the opportunity they are able to think creatively, take the initiative and lead in their own learning. Some satisfactory teaching and all unsatisfactory teaching uses too narrow a range of teaching and learning styles that restricts pupils' learning and does not develop their independence or creativity. Sometimes planning is inadequate and assessment is not used to aid learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the opportunities in lessons together with the extensive excellent extra-curricular activities make for a good overall curriculum. The range of the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory since the statutory requirements for information and communication technology and design and technology are not met. The breadth of the curriculum opportunities in Key Stage 4 is restricted for some pupils by the option choices available.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: teaching is good overall with good support and resources in lessons. Planning of work to ensure that curriculum content is covered is good but is not always targeted at specific needs. The co-ordination of provision across the curriculum to ensure that individual education plan targets are fully met is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent: the college provides many opportunities for pupils' development in all of these areas. The spiritual and moral aspects are particularly well developed and opportunities for cultural and social development are many and varied.
How well the college cares for its pupils	Very good: procedures for child protection and pupils' welfare are very good. The support and monitoring of personal development and academic progress are good. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is inconsistent. The educational and personal support and guidance and the monitoring and promotion of good behaviour and attendance, are very good.

The college works very well in partnership with parents who are fully supportive of the aims, ethos and high expectations of the college. The totality of the educational experience on offer at the college includes a vast range of extra-curricular activities that complement a traditional curriculum. The college offers nine subjects at GCSE, and religious education is taken early. The sixth form curriculum is mainly A-levels. The college has responded well to Curriculum 2000 and four General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) are now available. The college does not meet statutory requirements in information and communication technology and design and technology. Systems for social care are very effective for pupils but systems of analysing and using assessment data to aid curriculum planning are less effective.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the leadership by the principal is excellent and he is very well supported by the college leadership team. Middle management is good overall. Substantial changes in character have been very well managed although there is some inconsistency in the implementation of recently introduced policies. Statutory requirements for aspects of the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 and assessment at Key Stage 3 are not yet met.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: the governors provide very good levels of support and challenge for the college. They are well qualified and bring a wide range of expertise to their roles. The governors are failing to fulfil their statutory duties with regard to design and technology and information and communication technology in Key Stages 3 and 4 and reporting comparative data in Key Stage 3.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: new senior staff roles and responsibilities have recently been introduced and they are starting to effectively implement a model of monitoring

	and support for departments. There is inconsistent practice in undertaking the detailed analysis of performance data so as to impact on teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good: the resources available to the college, including considerable additional funds, are used effectively to meet the well planned programmes for development. Provision of teaching and support staff is very good. The range of teaching resources is unsatisfactory in some subject areas and this restricts pupils' learning. The college gives good value for money.

The strong leadership of the principal and the governing body has enabled the college to moved seamlessly through recent very substantial changes. New developments in the senior management team have the potential to improve the college's capacity to effectively monitor and evaluate its performance and the quality of teaching and learning. Financial controls and systems are excellent. Given the major changes in character, overall the staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good and improving. There are shortfalls in the provision of laboratories, some design and technology facilities and in the appropriate range of learning resources to support more independent and creative learning in the curriculum. The bursar and his team and all support staff contribute significantly to the success of the college. Principles of best value are well understood and applied rigorously. The college gives good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong leadership and management • The very high academic standards and all round education • The pupils' very good personal development • The very good teaching with high expectations • The pastoral care given by the college • The wide range of extra-curricular activities, sport, music and drama • The ethos of the college-modern with traditional values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent changes to the opportunity to meet subject teachers in Years 7 and 8. • The quality of provision for information and communication technology and design and technology • The colleges' response to concerns and criticisms raised by some parents • Some aspects of special education needs provision

Over 50 per cent of parents responded to the parents' questionnaire with more than 90 per cent of these parents well or very well satisfied in all aspects of the college's provision. The inspection team fully supports the confidence displayed by parents in the college and its work. The inspection team agree with the parents' concerns over the subjects mentioned but consider that the overall provision for special educational needs is satisfactory although co-ordination should improve. A small minority of parents feel the college is not always approachable; however there was sufficient evidence that the college responded well to concerns raised by parents. The college needs to ensure that the confidence it rightly displays in its work does not inadvertently convey the message that the college is being unresponsive.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

1. Pupils enter the college with above average attainment as measured by the Key Stage 2 tests and by the college's own assessment procedures through the Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs). Both these measures indicate a small but significant minority of pupils whose attainment is below average. Pupils in Year 10 and above went through a selection process based on ability and the profile in these years is slightly stronger. The college made a number of curriculum and other changes in order to respond very positively to this situation.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in the 1999 tests are very high compared with the national and similar schools averages and places the college in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. The 2000 results, confirmed during the inspection, indicate very high attainment and show an improvement on the previous year. Substantial numbers of pupils attain the highest grades in all core subjects; approximately 60 per cent of pupils in English, 80 per cent in mathematics and 50 per cent in science achieved Levels 7 or 8 while the national expectation is Level 5 or 6. There is no significant variation in the performance of boys and girls.
3. In subjects other than English, mathematics and science, teacher assessments in all subjects show very high attainment for boys and girls. They are slightly inflated for information and communication technology and design and technology but overall standards in all subjects are well above national expectations.
4. Key Stage 4 GCSE results are very high with 91.5 per cent achieving 5 A*-C grades in 2000 compared with 90 per cent in 1999. Results in English are consistently high with virtually all pupils achieving A*-C grades and about one third achieving A*/A grades in 1999, this figure rose to 43 per cent in the 2000 examinations. Mathematics paints a similar picture with 95 per cent of pupils achieving A*-C grades and 45 per cent and 37 per cent achieving A*/A grades in the last two years. Science results are very high but not as strong as English or mathematics. Seventy nine per cent achieved A*-C grades in 2000 compared with 90 per cent in the previous year, just over one third achieve A*/A grades.
5. GCSE results in other subjects are all consistently well above national averages with over 90 per cent of pupils achieving A*-C grades in most subjects in 2000. Significant improvements were made in the numbers of pupils attaining the higher grades in history and A*-C grades in religious studies. Geography results in 2000 and religious education in 1999 and 2000 are lower than performance in other subjects. Pupils are now entered for GCSE religious studies in Year 10 and their attainment in the 2000 examinations is well above the national average.
6. A-level results are consistently above national averages in the higher grades in all subjects apart from history and French, which were average, and Spanish which was well below the national average in 1999 but just below in 2000. Around two-thirds of candidates achieved the higher grades in art and design, design and technology, English literature, mathematics and further mathematics, music and physics. In most other subjects around half of students achieved the higher grades apart from history, English language and Spanish where around one-third of the students achieved the higher grades.
7. There are variations in results over time, with the previous three years showing a decline in the numbers of pupils achieving five A*-C grades. This trend was reversed in the 2000 examinations. Improvement is due mainly to clearer focused strategies for improving standards in specific subject areas, notably mathematics, art and design and history. Performance in Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science have also shown a significant improvement in the last three years. There is a strong upward trend with substantial numbers of pupils attaining the higher grades as the teachers and pupils become used to the demands of these tests.
8. The statutory targets set in conjunction with the Local Education Authority are consistently higher

than those indicated through the analysis of data and by comparison with similar schools. The college sets challenging targets, above 90 per cent, for A*-C grades which is over 15 per cent above the indicative target given by the Local Education Authority. The college has consistently achieved these targets.

9. Standards of work seen in lessons during the inspection and through the scrutiny of work indicate that standards are high and reflect a continued expectation for examination success that will at least be in line with, and could exceed, current figures. Standards of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are very high.

10. In English, work seen is of a very high standard in Years 9 and 11 and above average in Year 13. The majority of pupils are confident, fluent speakers and very considerate listeners. Most can back up the points they make with reasons and evidence from the texts they are studying. Both boys and girls of a full range of ability can work together effectively in pairs and groups to discuss, plan and explore ideas and most can feedback their ideas coherently and clearly to the whole class. A good proportion are articulate and explain points at length and with precision as well as putting points together to argue a case. By the end of Key Stage 4 all pupils write detailed, well-organised and largely accurate assignments for GCSE with clear introductions and conclusions. The best work is of a very high standard in terms of its maturity, originality and structure as well as accuracy. Sixth-formers write clear, well-organised and thoughtful notes and essays, whilst the best A-level work is perceptive, extended and carefully structured.

11. Pupils' above average language skills on entry are developed and extended successfully in a full range of subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4. These language skills effectively support the very high attainment in the Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations. They are a key reason for pupils achieving very well across all subjects. Almost all pupils and sixth-formers, including those with special educational needs, are confident, fluent speakers, considerate listeners and participate willingly in class discussions. They recognise and value others' points of view and ask sensible and thoughtful questions. The vast majority can successfully understand the materials they meet in lessons and can use a range of reading strategies flexibly. They can largely deduce and infer meaning and synthesise points clearly and succinctly. Most pupils are adept at locating information on the Internet and can extract and successfully use what is relevant to their needs. Pupils' writing skills are well-developed by the end of Year 9 and continue to be extended and refined in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Subject vocabulary is systematically taught in most departments to deepen pupils' grasp of important concepts. Most subjects help pupils to learn how to write concise notes, extended essays and reports; in some subjects, notably history and English, they write effectively in a wide range of forms. Writing at length is not well developed in mathematics. By the end of Year 11, virtually all pupils produce well-organised, accurate, detailed assignments. The GCSE written work of the higher attaining pupils and the more able A-level students is of an excellent standard: it is mature, perceptive and very well-structured. Most sixth-formers write competent notes and essays.

12. In mathematics, work seen is of a very good standard. In Key Stage 3 standards are very good but could be better for pupils in the higher sets in Year 7. By the end of Year 9 standards are high as are standards at the end of Key Stage 4. Those students who go on to A-level courses in mathematics work to a standard that is well above average. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a strong emphasis on numerical aspects of mathematics, mental calculation is encouraged and most pupils are comfortable with this. Pupils achieve high standards in most aspects of the subject. They can make links between areas of mathematics, for instance in forming and solving quadratic equations that involved the manipulation of algebraic fractions. Pupils have very good vocabulary in all areas of mathematics observed. Standards are not as high in using and applying mathematics. Pupils' skills in the three strands of problem solving, communication, particularly written, and reasoning- are not well developed by the start of Year 11. Post- 16 pupils build on the firm foundation reflected in the high grades achieved at GCSE. Skills and understanding in algebra are good and are extended through the study of the modules covering pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, information and communication technology (ICT) is not well used to enhance learning.

13. Mathematics is used well by pupils in several other subjects. Pupils accurately measure and mark out their designs in design and technology; interpret graphs in history; substitute numbers into formulae in cells of a spreadsheet in information and communication technology; use distance-time graphs to calculate speed in physics; draw and interpret graphs in chemistry; and use large numbers for prices in Spanish. Sixth form students manipulate equations and calculate gradients of graphs in physics and use percentages and formulae in economics. Overall, pupils are able to cope well with the mathematical demands in other

subjects in all key stages.

14. In science, standards are well above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form standards are above average in chemistry, physics and biology. Within these overall judgements there are slight variations across Key Stages 3 and 4. These variations are linked to the quality of teaching and in particular to the ability of teachers to plan stimulating lessons and use their subject knowledge to extend the learning of the most able pupils. Overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical and life processes, living things and materials are above average. They perform experiments in a safe, sensible and effective manner. Year 9 pupils use ticker-tape machines to investigate constant speed and acceleration. Pupils in Year 11 have a good knowledge of the Electromagnetic Spectrum and sixth form students effectively describe the role of the sodium/potassium ion pump in nerve transmission in biology. Investigative skills are developed in Key Stage 3: pupils demonstrate an ability to predict, plan and observe well. Skills of analysis and evaluation are less well developed. By Key Stage 4 pupils generally have very good investigative skills and can apply scientific knowledge to effectively explain their predictions and conclusions, but their ability to evaluate is still less well developed.

15. In art and design, in Key Stage 3, standards of work are very good: pupils quickly learn to use 2B pencils and coloured pencils in the correct application of shading, tone and perspective. Such skills are retained and developed over the years in progressively demanding tasks. Gifted and talented Key Stage 3 pupils are beginning to be identified, but they are not always appropriately grouped and given more challenging tasks. At the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, standards are well above average. All examination pupils have an extensive knowledge of a wide range of artists and they can apply the styles and techniques of such artists in exciting project work. Sketchbooks are most appropriately used by all pupils to collect and retain information and to try out ideas in lessons and in homework.

16. In design and technology, standards of work seen at Key Stage 3 are average overall; however this masks considerable range of attainment between different aspects of the subject and no food technology or textiles is taught. Pupils of all abilities are confident and capable in using tools and techniques to manufacture products from a range of materials. They understand properties of materials, know safe working practices, and apply these to enhance their manufacturing skills. Strengths in making are offset by weaker skills in evaluation, analysis and communication of ideas. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above average and are particularly strong in the development of manufacturing skills; products are well made to high quality standards although designing skills still show some weaknesses. Standards of work seen in the sixth form are very high. Attainment in A-level classes is particularly strong in the use of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and this enables students to produce exceptionally high quality timepieces with precision and accuracy and to professional standards.

17. In geography, the standards of work seen are above average with a substantial minority achieving well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. Year 9 pupils produce high quality extended writing, analysing the effects of ageing on the population. Attainment in problem solving is of a high standard. Pupils use geographical vocabulary with accuracy including some with special educational needs. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Higher attaining pupils produce good quality coursework based on fieldwork using statistical methods to analyse their own collected fieldwork data. Attainment in class is lower when occasionally pupils simply transmit information from textbooks, atlases, or teacher-dictated notes. All pupils handle data and map-work confidently. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Many students produce good quality extended writing in response to examination style questions. All show good knowledge and understanding of geographical processes and relationships and engage in complex enquiry work leading to well written conclusions.

18. In history, standards in work seen at Key Stage 3 are well above average and pupils achieve very well. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate very good historical knowledge and communicate it effectively both orally and in high quality extended writing. They show very good understanding of interpretations and representations of history, analyse historical evidence and communicate findings effectively and engage in analytical work at a very high level. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is well above the national average. Pupils are able to explain historical situations, analyse historical issues, show initiative in research, display perceptive understanding of historical concepts and terminology and use a range of evidence. Achievement of students in Year 13 is high. Students demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding and give clear written and oral explanations for complex historical events. Attainment is very

high for this stage of the course.

19. In information and communication technology (ICT), the standards observed in Key Stage 3 are in line with national averages in communicating information and modelling, but below in measurement and control. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in information and communication technology by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge, skills and understanding for their age, have a confident approach to the technology and can navigate their way around the college systems proficiently. Younger pupils are able to access and retrieve information and have a good knowledge of spreadsheets. By the end of the key stage, knowledge and experience of measurement and control is very limited. The current Year 9 pupils have not yet had the experience of the new college systems compared to pupils in Years 7 and 8. Pupils make poor progress as they move through Key Stage 4, and by the end of the key stage the standards overall are below average. All pupils are aware of basic tools such as word processing, communicating using e-mail, methods of researching including the use of the Internet, and using spreadsheets. The skills and understanding of a large number of pupils is not sufficiently advanced in these areas. The standards in the sixth form are very variable. Attainment in lessons in the new courses introduced in Year 12 is good. The excellent resources and the expert tuition of the teachers enable pupils to develop skills in presentation and desktop publishing. Sixth-formers largely constructed the very impressive college web site during the last academic year. In contrast students knowledge of information and communication technology applications in everyday activities is very limited, particularly in Year 13.

20. The contribution of subject departments to pupils' information and communication technology capability is very variable as some departments use information and communication technology as an integral part of their teaching programmes and others make limited use of the college's or their own facilities. In design and technology a clear programme of work incorporating computer-aided design and manufacture for older pupils enables them to use the technology to produce work of a quality not possible through other methods. Pupils undertake information and communication technology work in lessons such subjects as English, history, geography and politics. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics, modern foreign languages, the sciences and the arts is minimal, and this is often linked to a lack of access to resources. The imminent developments related to Language College status, and the increased reliability of the new central ICT facilities, should help to improve this situation. In many subjects, but particularly geography, pupils are often encouraged to use the Internet or to use computers for research for coursework and homework, which many do in their own time.

21. In modern foreign languages, standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectations and sometimes well above. Pupils quickly grasp and learn new structures, produce neat and accurate work using a good range of tenses, and understand spoken and written extracts of the foreign language made up of familiar words. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are at times in line with national expectations and at others above. Pupils write accurately and at length and acquire solid grammatical knowledge. Pupils are able to understand quite extensive spoken and written passages but lack accuracy and fluency of pronunciation and speech. Pupils rarely use the foreign language in a spontaneous manner in either key stage. Boys tend to perform less well than girls at GCSE, particularly at the higher A* and A grades. The overall standard of work seen in the sixth form was average. All students were able to follow lessons conducted entirely in the foreign language. Writing and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are strong features. The higher attaining students are able and eager to speak the foreign language with considerable confidence and fluency. However, weaker A-level students are less secure in their knowledge and tend to remain passive and reticent in lessons unless targeted specifically by teachers.

22. In music, standards at Key Stage 3 in lessons range from average to very high and are good overall. Singing, though not always of top quality and mainly in unison, is always hearty and confident and above average. Year 7 pupils carry forward past learning to more demanding tasks later in Key Stage 3. The more experienced instrumentalists and vocalists at Year 9 are not fully stretched. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are very high, pupils apply phrasing and interpretation confidently to their performances and produce exciting compositions. Many GCSE pupils starting the course are at a Grade V standard, often competent on two or more instruments and with strong performing skills. Attainment in the sixth form is very high. Students apply learnt concepts very well, for example, tonality, key, chords and cadences, but some have difficulty with musical dictation. A-level students are very experienced instrumentalists or vocalists and have high listening and appraising skills.

23. In physical education, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average in swimming and games but is unsatisfactory for a minority of pupils in gymnastics. The majority of pupils swim confidently with good technique and very good personal survival skills. In games pupils use good technique and apply learnt skills effectively into the game situation. In gymnastics a minority of pupils lack body control, confidence and fluency. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national average. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics effectively. They play competitive games with precision and anticipation and display advanced techniques and adapt play skilfully. Basketball skills are less advanced. In outdoor and adventurous activities pupils work co-operatively and safely. The attainment by the majority of students in the sixth form studying on the A- and AS- Level courses is above the national average. Students are confident in the use of technical language, speak and write confidently and analyse their own and other performances to refine each others' skills. The standard achieved by sixth formers in non-examination sport is average.

24. In sixth form subjects, attainment in business studies is very high and in line with previous years. Achievement within the subject is good; students are able to work collaboratively, and draw on previous experiences such as work experience to inform their presentations. They are able to work to tight timeframes and use role-play effectively to highlight conflict within the work place. In economics, standards are very high. Students make good reference to economic theory and use formulae and economic theory well to explain their written answers. Students are able to interpret case study examples without much difficulty and apply themselves diligently to their work. Standards in the GNVQ subjects studied are good and in politics, standards are high and in line with previous years.

25. The achievement of pupils results from a potent combination of important aspects of the college's work: pupils' attitudes, aspirations, commitment and hard work; parental support and confidence in the college; a shared ethos which promotes high standards in a caring, challenging but supportive environment; the quality of teaching; the breadth of the educational experience on offer including a vast range of extra-curricular activities which complements a more traditional curriculum. Within this context pupils' and students' achievement is good and often very good or better in almost all subject areas.

26. In Key Stage 3 pupils' achievements are excellent in mathematics; very good in English, science, history and in information and communication technology in Years 7 and 8; good in design and technology, modern foreign languages, geography, art and design, music and physical education. In Key Stage 4, pupils' achievements are also excellent in mathematics; very good in English, science, history, art and design, music and physical education; good in design and technology, geography and modern foreign languages. In the sixth form, achievement is excellent in mathematics; very good in science, design and technology, ICT, history, art and design, music, physical education and business studies; good in English, geography and economics; and satisfactory in modern foreign languages.

27. Overall the needs of individuals are well met. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress. Those with statements make satisfactory progress though their Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are not always reflected fully in the class work set. Pupils at Stages 1-3 of the Code of Practice make good progress towards targets set in class, but overall their Individual Education Plans lack the detail of the specific skills to be developed and do not indicate where pupils could be challenged to improve further.

28. There is little variation in standards or achievement between girls and boys with some exceptions: this is most marked in geography where boys exceeded girls in the higher grades at GCSE and in modern foreign languages where the girls perform better than the boys. In music, last years A-level group was all boys although the groups in Years 12 and 13 are mixed. The very small ethnic minority do well in the college. A broad group of pupils are identified as gifted and talented and within this a smaller group is identified as part of the Excellence in Cities programme. Pupils in these groups are well served by the college; they make good progress and achieve well. Opportunities exist in abundance for all pupils to develop a range of talents including musical, sporting, debating, creative, practical, artistic and academic skills through the very comprehensive and well attended extra-curricular programmes. Significant numbers of students reach the higher levels in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE grades A* and A and A-levels grades A and B. Considerable numbers of students take music examinations, some at Grade 8. Many pupils are in national and regional teams and orchestras and have achieved national awards, for example the Arkwright scholarship in design and technology or the Duke of Edinburgh Gold awards. However, lessons are not sufficiently planned in most subjects in order to make specific provision for this group. Often individual gifted and talented children achieve

very high levels in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE because of the ethos, expectations, overall good teaching and pupils' hard work and commitment rather than responding to specific programmes devised for them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

29. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They are keen and eager to come to college and are proud to be members of the college community. They are determined to learn in their lessons and are aware that hard work brings success. Their enthusiasm for college life is further reflected in their involvement in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and social opportunities provided by the college. Almost all pupils are involved in at least one of these activities, with particularly strong support for sport, music, drama and the use of information and communication technology facilities. This infectious participation affects all groups of students; lower attainers are keen and committed.

30. Pupils move calmly and purposefully round the college. They are invariably polite and courteous, opening doors for visitors and willing to help them find their way. They are keen to discuss their work and are very well behaved both in class and around the college in general. There are many factors that help to explain the pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour; personal and parental expectations; the excellent relationships with staff; the overall feeling of a caring and considerate community; and the continuity of Catholic ethos between the home and the college.

31. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and acknowledged by a large majority of parents and parents support the college well with regard to pupils' behaviour. All staff contribute to the good level of adult supervision around the college which results in pupils arriving for lessons in an orderly and calm manner, ready to learn. In lessons pupils are willing, co-operative and supportive of their teachers. They always persevere and when challenged achieve well. They take part with enthusiasm in drama, music and information and communication technology extra-curricular activities. Very large numbers take part in sports extra-curricular activities even in poor weather. In around two-thirds of lessons in each key stage, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be very good or excellent. A pervasive, positive and supportive ethos contributes to the high standards achieved by pupils.

32. Teachers treat pupils with respect which contributes significantly to pupils' attitudes, behaviour and their personal development. They support and encourage them; setting high expectations; providing study clubs and learning prefects for those who need extra support. The principal's Saturday detention of manual chores around the college, called 'Hard Labour' in the staff handbook, is infrequently used. Although the name of the detention appears to be at odds with the positive ethos of the college and the excellent relationships visible elsewhere the principle behind the action is accepted by pupils and parents.

33. Pupils are quick and keen to answer questions in class. They are considerate and listen to responses. They are courteous to visitors. Pupils respect each others property, for example, being able to leave their belongings in the foyer whilst they have their lunch in the dining hall although there has been some loss of books from the careers resources centre. Steps are in place to remedy this situation through the new library and resource area.

34. The number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour is low and they are tackled effectively by staff to ensure there is no disruption caused to the learning of other pupils. There are a small number of incidents of bullying but pupils know they are tackled quickly and effectively by staff. Bullying is effectively dealt with through the Education for Personal Relationships (EPR) programme, the publication of the bullying policy in the homework diaries and by off-site retreats provided for Year 7 pupils in order to promote the theme of 'belonging'.

35. The college has an effective exclusion procedure. The number of fixed term exclusions was low at 14 last year. They were for incidents such as irresponsible behaviour, violent and antisocial behaviour, bullying or persistent breaches of college discipline. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last three years. There are situations in which a pupil would not be allowed to attend college without having been excluded either for a fixed period or permanently. This is usually in the case of alleged serious misconduct pending an investigation by the college staff and an expected meeting with parents or where the college has come to an agreement with parents in order to negotiate a fresh start. Given the possible delay in fulfilling the intended

actions or the prolonged absence from school, this practice could be considered to be contrary to statutory requirements and DfEE guidance and should be reviewed.

36. Parents say that their children respond very well indeed to the caring, supportive community. Pupils in Year 7 quickly take their part in college and benefit from the support given, not only of their teachers but also from all pupils they meet. They enrich their college day with activities from the range of extra opportunities offered, often with the help and guidance of older pupils from Year 8 or above. Sixth form students act as mentors or 'pals' for younger pupils. Pupils in Year 7 know that they can call on their 'pals' if they feel in any way intimidated or in need of support. Throughout college all pupils and students are confident and secure in the knowledge that any form of harassment or bullying is never tolerated and should be discussed with their teachers.

37. From the earliest years, pupils are encouraged to take initiative and responsibility. For example, they arrange their own quiz, chess and other games competitions. All pupils and students can belong to the debating society and they value the opportunity to listen to the views of others and different sides presented in the debate. The many extra opportunities for sport, music and drama enrich pupils' lives and encourage perseverance, team spirit and co-operative attitudes. Pupils discover and develop individual talents. Year 8 and 9 pupils rehearsed for 'The Wizard of Oz' with great enthusiasm and sense of performance, their dance has been choreographed and music will be played by Year 12 and 13 students and the older students will make masks and costumes.

38. The college council of pupils and students from all years reflects the college community spirit and has successfully taken up such issues as road safety, healthy lunches and fundraising events for charity. Older students show a remarkable commitment to community service and awareness of different social conditions and the needs of others. Some students organise Sunday evening activities for disadvantaged citizens and help at lunchtime in a college for pupils with special educational needs. The World Issues group do voluntary work to support people who are suffering deprivation and members of the Amnesty International group take up the cause of political prisoners. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in the residential activities which contribute to their personal growth and awareness of the wider world. In college pupils learn about religions other than their own.

39. As pupils progress through the college, they respond well to increasing opportunities to develop leadership skills. Prefects cope confidently with a range of duties which include public functions and guiding visitors round the college. They have very good support from their tutors and clear guidance on the conduct of their daily supervision duties. Their conduct is based on the college ethos of care and consideration for others and they provide very good role models for the younger pupils. Although many pupils and students attain at a very high level there is a complete lack of arrogance in behaviour to each other and to staff.

40. Pupils are helped to set themselves high but realistic targets and they work very hard to achieve them. Older pupils and students develop good skills of personal study in class, in supervised study classes and at home. All Year 10 pupils take GCSE religious studies and they learn to organise, research and present their work within time limits. The college has implemented plans to extend the library and information communication technology facilities. Students value the presentation and communication skills day which extends their experience with professional advice and help with self assessment. Some would like to spend more time on preparation for independent life but are aware of the need to study for their external examinations. By the time they leave college students are well prepared for their future life as students and citizens and their talents are highly developed. Parents accept and appreciate that the college ethos combines high attainment with humility and that pupils should always continue to seek improvement and even higher attainments.

41. Pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude towards their work and make good progress in lessons. They are keen to work in what is a very supportive and positive atmosphere and are not afraid to seek advice. They contribute positively in class and are included well. They enjoy strong support from their peers in a very caring community.

42. The college pays attention to attendance issues, contacting parents quickly if a pupil does not arrive in college and no information is received by way of explanation. Consequently, attendance is very good. The college is working to introduce a computer-based system for recording attendance including attendance at

individual lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

43. Overall teaching is good and learning is very good. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of the 168 lessons observed. Teaching is good or better in three quarters of these lessons and in 44 per cent of lessons is very good or excellent. All teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory or better with eight out of every ten lessons good or better and just over half very good or excellent. Five per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory with the majority of this teaching observed in Key Stage 3. There is no significant pattern to this unsatisfactory teaching as these lessons are single incidents within a number of satisfactory or better lessons in a range of subjects. Teaching is good overall in English, mathematics and science for all ages of pupils and there is some very good or excellent teaching in all three subjects.

44. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. It is excellent in mathematics, science, business studies, geography and history. Teachers give very clear explanations of key points. It is very good in all other subjects except design and technology where, although good, it is less strong in the design element of the course. Good use is made of topical examples in geography to add interest and motivate students.

45. Overall teachers' planning is good. It is excellent in history where pupils are engaged and challenged by a variety of teaching styles within lessons and the development of communication and thinking skills. It is very good in art and design and physical education and good in the majority of other subjects. Planning is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. There is a very small number of lessons in which planning is unsatisfactory and where planning does not focus precisely on the targets set in the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

46. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and teaching methods are good. Teachers are skilled in questioning pupils. In good and very good lessons in English pupils are stretched and challenged by texts and activities and there is a judicious balance of support and challenge. In mathematics, in Key Stage 3 there is a brisk start to lessons with ample mental and oral work. In information and communication technology there are high expectations of technical skill. In some lessons in modern foreign languages there is variety of pace and activity with good use of the target language. In music, there are differentiated tasks in classroom performance.

47. Teachers use time and resources well and make overall good use of assessment, marking and homework. In art and design a good working atmosphere is created within the studio environment. In design and technology there is excellent use of a technician to support learning in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form enabling students to master the complexities of the computer aided design system and the computer controlled milling machine. In physical education pupils have opportunities to plan and evaluate their short sequences and evaluate and comment on other pupils' performances. Assessment data is used well to inform future teaching and curriculum planning in English, mathematics, art and design, history and design and technology where teachers' marking provides a very good level of feedback to pupils on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. It is not used effectively in the sciences, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology or physical education and in other subjects the practice is inconsistent.

48. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy; teachers set high expectations in the use of appropriate technical language in their subject areas and there is good use of mental arithmetic in Key Stage 3. Very few pupils arrive with poor literacy or numeracy skills: those whose skills are below average are well supported and progress well during Key Stage 3 so that in 2000 all children had reached or exceeded the expected Level 5 in English and mathematics.

49. The needs of individual students are well met by teaching in the college. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and make good progress. Support is good when learning support prefects are able to spend time explaining difficult concepts or helping individuals to feel more confident in class and to raise their self-esteem. Planning is good in individual subjects apart from a minority of lessons where Individual Education Plan targets are not addressed. Specialist staff know the pupils well and enjoy very

good relationships. They have a good understanding of individual needs but are reliant on subject staff to direct their work. The targets established in this manner, are usually met but are focused on achieving subject competence rather than addressing the specific needs of the pupils.

50. Teachers provide programmes that extend and challenge gifted and talented pupils. Significant numbers of pupils achieve the highest levels in English and mathematics and most subjects achieve A* or A grades which exceed national averages in GCSE examinations. Many opportunities to develop a wider range of gifts and talents particularly in music, art and design and physical education are well attended by pupils. Students identified through the Excellence in Cities programmes have enjoyed an enriched programme that is not always adequately focused on academic achievement. Planning for the needs of gifted and talented pupils is often implicit in the broader teaching programmes rather than explicitly identified. Focusing teachers' planning in this area would add to the existing very good provision.

51. Teaching is good overall in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Only eight lessons were judged unsatisfactory; the majority of these lessons were in Key Stage 3 and there was no pattern to this unsatisfactory performance in terms of subjects or classes. Two-fifths of lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 also contained very good and excellent teaching with 70 per cent good or better. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form and eight out of every ten lessons were good or better and just over half very good or better. Overall teaching is very good in art and design, business studies, information and communication technology, history, music and physical education, it is satisfactory in modern foreign languages and good in other subjects.

52. Pupils' learning is very good in all key stages and in over half of lessons in the sixth form learning was very good or excellent. There are many factors contributing to such high standards of learning. The college is well supported by parents. Pupils come to lessons ready and prepared for learning and their attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent. Relationships are excellent and pupils respect each others' contributions. The college sets high expectations and supports pupils very well. The range of extra-curricular activities challenges and enthuses pupils, enriches the curriculum and gives pupils opportunities to develop an independent approach to learning in contrast to the limited opportunities provided in a significant number of lessons. In lessons, pupils persevere when challenged; they concentrate well, are productive and work at a good pace. Consequently pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding very well. Pupils understand their own learning and older pupils are able to identify specific areas for improvement in their subjects. Teachers manage pupils very well. Learning is excellent in information and communication technology lessons because of pupils' prior knowledge and good teaching. Learning is good or very good in other subjects and satisfactory in modern foreign languages.

53. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, many pupils are willing and helpful to teachers and try their best but sometimes pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. Some teaching is over directive and uses a narrow range of opportunities that restricts pupils' learning and does not develop their independence or creativity. The lack of detailed planning results in poor learning opportunities. Pupils need greater consolidation of learning in modern foreign languages and lessons do not involve a high enough proportion of pupils in activities. Insufficient time is given to the teaching of the use and application of mathematics and this should be explicitly taught in Key Stage 3. Resources are inadequate in economics. With some notable exceptions, in particular design and technology and politics, many subjects make insufficient use information and communication technology.

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

54. In the last three years the college has changed status from an independent school, selecting pupils by ability, to a voluntary aided college providing for the full range of ability. With the change of status has come the requirement to provide the statutory National Curriculum and the necessity to meet the needs of a different cohort of pupils. Only Year 10 and older pupils were admitted under the selective system. The college is well on the way to meet these new demands, for example it has been successful in its application for Language College status.

55. The opportunities in lessons and the extensive extra-curricular programme, taken together, provide a good curriculum. The overall curriculum in Key Stage 3 and 4 is broad but deficient in aspects of information and communication technology in Year 9 and the food and textiles elements of the design and technology curriculum and is therefore currently unsatisfactory. The college's provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent and adds significantly to pupils' intellectual and social development. Typically, over 600 pupils attend around 40 pre-college, lunchtime or after-college clubs and activities daily. The programme of sporting and musical activities is excellent and there is a very good range of college clubs and societies associated with many other curricular areas. Study clubs are available in many subjects in which pupils can catch up with homework or course work or gain additional teacher support. There are also various opportunities during the college year for pupils to travel both in this country and abroad. The modern foreign languages department offers an annual trip and exchange visit to France and Spain. Sports trips in the last year have involved walking in the Himalayas and competitive games in the Caribbean. A history trip visited world war graves in northern France. Pupils can enter for the north-west Mathematics Challenge Competition. Many extra-curricular activities are heavily subsidised, although parents are expected to meet the costs of some trips, groups of parents and pupils raise money to help to cover costs. These opportunities play an important part in consolidating and extending learning opportunities and give pupils alternative cultural, leisure and sporting experiences. All the societies and clubs are supervised by teaching staff. Parents justifiably express strong approval of the college's extra-curricular provision.

56. In Key Stage 3 the quality and range of the physical education curriculum is excellent in games but the gymnastics provision is limited by the lack of good equipment. The curriculum is very good in art and design, history and music and good in English, science and modern foreign languages. Overall the geography curriculum is satisfactory as is the mathematics curriculum although this lacks balance across the

areas of study particularly in using and applying mathematics. The use of information and communication technology is insufficient to support learning in mathematics, science, music, art and design, history, geography and modern foreign languages.

57. Since the governors fail to fully meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, the Key Stage 3 curriculum is unsatisfactory. In design and technology, pupils are not able to work with compliant materials such as food and textiles, a part of the statutory curriculum for this subject. Information and communication technology is not systematically taught after Year 8 and thus pupils do not have access to this element of the statutory curriculum.

58. The quality and range of the curriculum, provided within specific subjects in Key Stage 4, is excellent in physical education, very good in English, history and music, good in science and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in mathematics and geography. Some of the strengths of the extra-curricular programme are not available to be studied to examination level, for example physical education and drama, although the college intends to introduce these courses in 2001. All pupils study religious education and take the GCSE in Year 10. A very small number of parents have expressed concerns about the curriculum and a very small number of pupils have had to leave the college to study their preferred range of subjects.

59. The overall Key Stage 4 curriculum is also unsatisfactory in that it does not fully meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum in design and technology and the number of optional subjects is limited. The National Curriculum requires design and technology to be provided as a mandatory subject for all pupils, however fewer than 25 per cent of pupils study the subject and all follow the resistant materials optional design and technology course. Due to inadequate accommodation, the food and textiles options of the subject are not available. Information communication technology is not directly taught and the provision through subjects is haphazard and therefore unsatisfactory. The decision of the governing body to restrict the number of GCSEs that pupils can study appropriately reduces the work load for some pupils but significantly limits the opportunity for others to experience a wider range of subjects.

60. In the sixth form, the college offers 20 subjects to Advanced level, a wide range that meets the choice of the majority of students in the sixth form. A strict entry requirement of six grade Bs prevents a small number of students gaining access and this policy runs counter to the commitment expected in the current entry arrangements. There is no intermediate level programme in place and the college will need to pursue their plans to widen provision if it is to meet the needs of the current more comprehensive intake. The college has successfully planned for the introduction of Curriculum 2000. Year 11 pupils are provided with a very helpful brochure and clear advice about the AS and A2 programmes. In addition, the college has introduced four GNVQ advanced subjects. Two of these, information and communication technology and performing arts, have attracted viable numbers and are running successfully.

61. All students follow a general programme in religious education, physical education and Key Skills (Year 12). The Key Skills programme has been well organised and introduced successfully as a discrete component with students have special files and documentation. Auditing arrangements are less clear and the programme needs to be kept under review to ensure that the programme meets the skill level of the different students. Students are given a range of enrichment opportunities within their subjects. Students in performing arts spoke of their frequent visits to the theatre and business studies students were due to attend a business studies conference. The college enables staff to run workshops outside lessons and 15 subjects offer additional lunchtime sessions. There are good examples of students receiving individual tutorials on their progress and help with their applications for higher education.

62. In the sixth form the quality and range of the curriculum is excellent in physical education, very good in English, design and technology, history, art and design, music and business studies, good in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in information and communication technology and geography. It is unsatisfactory in economics as the department lacks resources and there is little detail to the scheme of work.

63. Responsibility for curriculum leadership has recently moved to heads of each key stage although early planning for curriculum development currently resides with the principal. He is considering plans to introduce textiles into Key Stage 3 to meet the National Curriculum requirements for design and technology and business studies and physical education into Key Stage 4 to broaden the choices available formal plans have yet to be taken to the governing body. The heads of subjects have been allocated additional

management time this year to develop Curriculum 2000; this is happening successfully in all subjects except Spanish at Key Stage 3.

64. Pupils with special educational needs are included well in lessons and are fully involved in the life of the college. They receive good support from their subject teachers, the learning support teacher and the learning support prefects. The availability of extra support through lunch-time clubs is an effective mechanism to enhance learning. Whilst pupils with statements receive good support in lessons, the college has yet to ensure that all aspects of their statements are implemented.

65. Overall the college provides good or better equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and art and design and all have access to an equally demanding programme of work in these subjects. There are however some areas for further development in both key stages. Design and technology is insufficiently broad and balanced at Key Stage 3 restricting opportunities for pupils to experience working with the full range of compliant materials and food. Information and communication technology is not taught from Year 9 onwards and mathematics mainly develops pupils' understanding using and applying mathematics in Key Stage 4.

66. Overall the equality of opportunity for students moving from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form is satisfactory but the current entry requirements and the curriculum provision in Key Stage 4 restrict the choices of a minority of students. The college has set what it believes to be a reasonable entry requirement for the selective nature of the present older pupils; this policy is unacceptably restrictive for those pupils admitted to the college under the new admissions arrangements. Currently the college does not provide a programme of planned curriculum opportunities at Key Stage 4 for all pupils to study design and technology and information and communication technology. This results in uneven access of opportunity for all pupils to take up further advanced study of these subjects and further disadvantages girls who are under-represented in A-level technology courses and careers. The sixth form provision is restricted to pupils who achieve six GCSE at grade B or the equivalent although there is some leeway for pupils who have just missed the grades but are 'good citizens' of the college; consequently a number of pupils have to leave the college at short notice. Extending support for these pupils is rightly identified as an area for development by the careers' department.

67. All subject departments have an equal opportunities policy but few departments have reviewed their teaching arrangements to take account of any sophisticated analysis of data and monitoring which may highlight variations in learning or attainment by specific groups of pupils, for example boys and girls or gifted and talented pupils. Consequently, in many subjects, teachers' medium-term planning does not reflect specific lessons learned from previous examination or test results. The college provides a very caring environment and makes positive efforts to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are integrated into the curriculum and activities such as extra-curricular clubs. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is very good.

68. Overall the provision for personal, social and health education is good. Planning for this provision, called 'Education for Personal Relationships' by the college is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 where the programme is well developed. Statutory requirements for health and sex education are covered in the programme or in science. The long-established programme in the upper school is well planned and relevant to older pupils. The curriculum for younger pupils is being augmented by some use of activities from a well-regarded course. The time available to this programme is just satisfactory as skilful teachers in Key Stages 3 and 4 often improve on the planned curriculum and make good use of the short time available. This enables pupils to make good progress in all aspects of the programme.

69. A well-planned programme of careers education and guidance helps pupils to make informed curriculum choices from Year 9 to Year 13 and to prepare for adult life. It is well linked to the roles of form tutors and to progression to higher education. Appropriate careers education and guidance programmes are available on the college computer terminals and are understood and accessed well by pupils. Many of the careers resources have not been returned by pupils and due to the rebuilding programme, the remainder was not available at the time of the inspection. Pupils in Year 11 are encouraged to find their own work experience placements after their GCSE examinations. The college undertakes the necessary health and safety checks and supports those pupils who have not been able to find an appropriate placement. Half the pupils undertook a work placement last year and all Year 11 pupils who wish to do so, will be able to have a career interview by

'Career Decisions' this year. This provision does not ensure an equal opportunity for all.

70. The college attracts pupils from a very wide geographical area and many primary schools that vary year by year making partnership working more difficult. The college provides a significant induction programme for new pupils in order to compensate for this. Strong historical links exist with the independent primary school next door with good arrangements for sharing facilities. The Language College status requires the college to develop links with local primary schools and the community so that they can benefit from the college's resources; these are yet to be developed. There are good links with local higher education providers. The college is an effective centre for initial teacher training students and strong links exist between the providers and the college. This enhances the teaching programmes of the subjects involved and the college's mentoring programme for newly qualified teachers. The college invites visiting speakers, for example an ex-pupil who spoke at assembly on 'remembrance' about the loss of his father in the Second World War which added significantly to the spiritual and moral experience of the pupils involved. Pupils develop their sense of responsibility, social conscience and social skills through: effectively supporting the local community through charitable works; through running a Mencap club on the college site on Sunday evenings; by visiting the local St Vincent de Paul centre and by regularly working with the pupils of the nearby special college. There are good links with the local sports clubs. The history and geography departments do not make effective use of local resources to enrich pupils' learning and design and technology have insufficient links with local employers in order to provide specific contexts in which pupils can develop their work.

Curricular provision for personal development

71. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The college's philosophy and code of behaviour establish a firm foundation for pupils' personal development and pervade college life.

72. Provision for spiritual development is excellent. Although the quality of provision for religious education was outside the scope of this inspection a significant number of opportunities were observed in which the pupils demonstrated their very good understanding and experience of situations that developed their appreciation of spirituality. For example, the daily act of collective worship and assemblies are tied to a half-term theme chosen by the principal. Daily prayers are provided and observed in each tutor group. In Year 7, a pupil offered to read the prayers and a different pupil offered to give an interpretation. The two pupils take the prayer for the next day to study so that they are prepared for the short prayer session. A daily Eucharistic Service takes place in the chapel shortly before college starts and a room is set aside for reflection. A philosophy club, the 'Red Herring Club', considers fundamental questions. Teachers treat pupils with respect and value their ideas and contributions to lessons. A moving assembly on the theme of 'remembrance' concentrated on how death in war affects a family. It included beautiful singing from choir members of different ages of the poem 'We will remember them' accompanied by a solo trumpet player. Two Year 11 pupils read specially prepared texts reflecting sensitively and powerfully on their visit to the world war graves in northern France organised by the college. One presentation was a report, the second a personal response to the tragic loss of life.

73. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. There is strong emphasis on right and wrong in many subjects, including history, geography, physical education, English and modern foreign languages. Year 11 pupils discussed human rights issues in relation to the dominance of black soldiers in the American forces in the Vietnam war in a history lesson. The college's code of behaviour promotes principles rather than fear of punishment and pupils are encouraged to admit offences and make a fresh start and commitment to good behaviour. Pupils are able to make moral decisions affecting their behaviour as for example in the time they spend supporting good causes. Sometimes it is judged appropriate for pupils to include charity work in a programme of sanctions. There is strong support for developing world issues in the sixth form, for example discussions on Sierra Leone and Amnesty International. In an upper school committee meeting students were aware of the ethical issues linked to a specific manufacturer and the tension between imposing an embargo and the principle of individuals' free choice. Pupils have opportunities to develop and express moral values and extend their personal understanding in many subjects.

74. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Sixth-formers are able to take responsibility and show initiative and to manage democratically their social arrangement in their common room. Group rules are accepted in sports and pupils are able to see themselves within a wider context, especially in English, music, history and geography. Good social skills are developed in physical education when pupils discuss and

decide on sequences of actions, working collaboratively in pairs and support each other on the climbing wall. In lessons, pupils respect one another; they give each other time to think and reply to questions. Pupils collaborate and co-operate well in lessons and contribute effectively to the life of the college, for example in the numerous drama productions each year. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and pupils spontaneously respond positively to others.

75. Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent. The excellent programme of extra-curricular activities is a rich source of pupils' learning about cultural tradition. There is a wide range of sports activities; cathedral music tradition; four drama productions a year; world issues discussion; and includes visits to other countries in sports and modern foreign languages. Pupils learn about other cultures in history, geography, music and art and design and through strong links with the Christian Brothers across the world.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

76. Good arrangements are in place for the college to provide for child protection and staff know what to do should they have any concerns. Overall the college provides a safe environment for students, pupils and staff. The policy for college visits is based on the guidelines provided by the DfEE. Day and residential visits are carefully planned and evaluated. Risk assessments are in place throughout college and, in February 1999, the Health and Safety Executive inspector approved the present management review systems.

77. Relevant departments undertake risk assessments and teachers are aware of possible risks in their lessons. Minor health and safety hazards found during the inspection have been reported to the college. Fire prevention and electrical equipment is checked regularly and the college has regular practice of emergency evacuation. Provision for first aid is good and the college aims for every member of staff to have basic first aid training. The college has good links with the local children's hospital to help college staff provide for pupils' special medical needs. The catering facilities in college are excellent and breakfast and lunches provided are nutritious and appetising. The catering supervisor has discussed provision with the college council. Pupils and students learn about healthy life styles in both key stages and in the sixth form.

78. Attendance is monitored closely and procedures are good. Procedures for encouraging good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. A comprehensive and positive behaviour policy is consistently applied by staff. It supports and builds upon pupils' positive attitudes to the college resulting in high standards of behaviour in lessons. The number of incidents of inappropriate or anti-social behaviour is low. There is an appropriate system for recording incidents and circulating the information to form teachers and senior staff. Senior staff meet weekly to share knowledge of incidents and discuss the implications.

79. The college's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The behaviour policy is explicit in the promotion of respect and tolerance towards others. This is reflected in pupils' behaviour in class and around the college. Racist behaviour is very rare and is identified among the most serious category of offences. The college maintains appropriate records of pupils whose involvement in serious incidents results in their exclusion. This includes records of racist behaviour. Individual pupils' disciplinary records are maintained by form teachers and are in each pupil's college record. Although incidents attracting detentions are analysed at senior level, the college does not maintain an overall central record of all disciplinary incidents. This deprives the senior managers of the opportunity to recognise changing patterns of behaviour or incidents related to specific groups of pupils for example by age, teaching group, home district, ethnic background or ability and this is unsatisfactory.

80. The college procedure for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. The assessment policy identifies appropriate aims for the assessment of pupils' work and ties assessment to National Curriculum levels. The college assesses and reports pupils' progress to parents three times a year. The annual report to parents provides a well rounded picture of the curriculum pupils have studied, their attainment levels linked to National Curriculum levels, effort made, attendance and discipline record, the merits and distinctions they have gained for their work and their extra-curricular activities.

81. The college has introduced a new system of 'Pupil Review Days' in which the teaching is suspended and form teachers meet with parents and pupils to discuss pupils' progress over all subjects and personal development, and to set targets for the year ahead. Although younger pupils are not sure of their own targets, older pupils were able to describe detailed targets for the improvement of their own work in different subjects. The majority of parents favoured the 'Pupil Review Days'. The college is considering changing the date of the review day to ensure that there is sufficient time for parents to follow-up with individual subject teachers where parents wish to do so.

82. The college assessment policy includes the aim that assessment data is used to inform future

teaching and curriculum planning. This is happening in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology and history where teachers' marking provides a very good level of feedback to pupils on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Similarly verbal feedback during class activities and presentations is well used in business studies. It is not used effectively in the sciences, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology or physical education. The policy is inconsistently applied in other subjects and this is unsatisfactory. The policy does not recognise the uses of national and local data in analysing college performance overall, by subject, by pupil group or between genders. The college has recently allocated responsibility for the collection, analysis and use of assessment data to an experienced teacher who will be working with the director of information and communication technology.

83. End of Key Stage 3 reporting arrangements are unsatisfactory in that the governors and the college did not comply fully with the requirements in relation to assessment of music and physical education or the duty to inform parents fully of the college performance alongside individual pupil performance in 2000.

84. The college gives very good support to individual pupils, encouraging them to work hard and achieve well. The staff know their pupils very well. The award of merits and distinctions for good work linked to each pupil's ability level encourages consistent good performance. Monitoring of pupils' progress is undertaken at subject level by form teachers and by parents. Where homework is not completed, course work is behind schedule, effort grades are unsatisfactory, work is not to standard or pupils express concern, the college takes action. The college quickly identifies the extent of the difficulties from all teachers and an appropriate course of action is agreed with the pupil and parent. This could be through the use of the learning mentor, by support from a sixth form learning support prefect, by attendance at an appropriate study club, through the use of a daily report card or any combination of these actions. The pupil's progress is monitored by the head of key stage to ensure that there is improvement.

85. Pupils with special educational needs are cared for effectively. Pupils having statements of special educational need are monitored and review mechanisms meet statutory requirements. This college is developing an understanding of the special educational needs Code of Practice and relationships with the Local Education Authority but the college need to be more rigorous in ensuring that all needs which have been identified are met. On admission to the college pupils are tested to establish their cognitive ability. The results of this assessment contribute to the identification of pupils with special educational needs. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are in place for the pupils at Stage 3 and beyond. The co-ordination of this work and the arrangements for communicating the details of their Individual Education Plans to subject staff are unsatisfactory consequently subject specific targets do not clearly reflect individual pupil's needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

86. Partnership with parents is a great strength of the college. Parents are highly valued as a vital part of the whole college community and as partners in each child's education. All parents take part in the annual Cathedral Mass for St Edward's College, which re-affirms the college's commitment and purpose. The college arranges meetings to give all parents of children seeking admission to the college clear guidance on the criteria for acceptance.

87. Parents express very strong support for the way the college is led and managed, for the very good standards of teaching which encourage their children to do their best and for the excellent opportunities to take part in activities outside lessons. They are very pleased with the way pastoral care, and the feeling of family and community, create a climate which supports their children's good behaviour, good relationships and personal growth. Parents say that the college prepares their children very well to be socially aware, to develop their own talents, to grow in confidence but with humility and showing concern, responsibility and awareness of the needs of others.

88. Procedures to introduce new parents and their children to the college are outstandingly good. Parents attend meetings both before and after their children start college and are invited to meet socially at the September Parents' Dinner. They receive a report on their child's progress and have an opportunity to meet their child's form teacher individually half way through the Advent term. In March teachers provide an annual report on all subjects and extra-curricular involvement and, in June, a further progress report is issued. All parents and their children meet their form tutors at the annual review day in July. The parents' booklet and

the calendar and homework diary provide a vital link between home and college; parents of pupils from Years 7 to 11 are asked to sign the diary each week. The diary includes a wide range of information including a record of the Home College Partnership agreement, behaviour guidelines and rules, homework policy, uniform policy and procedures to monitor attendance and punctuality.

89. Throughout college pupils' and students' individual annual reports are full and comprehensive. They are produced at an appropriate time in the year and include clear information on what pupils and students are doing, a good evaluation on how well they are progressing and specific advice on any areas for further development. Additional information is shared with parents when necessary and with parents of pupils who have special educational needs.

90. At present, the college does not arrange for parents of pupils in Years 7 and 8 to meet their subject teachers. Some parents are not happy that the present arrangement to meet only the form teacher gives them sufficient information. Others say that form teachers are well briefed and they are satisfied with their discussions and with the information, which is based on the comprehensive assessment procedures used in all subject areas. The overall system is effective as, with the appropriate support, form teachers are able to give effective feedback. However, the timing prevented some form teachers from being present and in these few cases the system was unsatisfactory. The college always emphasises that any specific subject concerns should be discussed with staff as they arise, nevertheless, the college have usefully rescheduled the meeting to avoid clashes and management is monitoring the present arrangements. Parents of the older pupils and students have discussion evenings as well as parent/teacher meetings. They receive very good information to help their children make decisions on GCSE choices, advanced level options and career and higher education choices.

91. The college has excellent procedures to involve parents in any pastoral concerns and in procedures to make sure that their children are making the very best progress of which they are capable. Occasionally reports are produced on a lesson by lesson and daily basis. These are sent home to help parents help their child develop good attitudes to work and college. Teachers involve parents at an early stage if pupils' attendance, homework or well-being give any cause for concern. The very large majority of parents, in their turn, say that the college responds very well to the concerns they raise. A minority of parents are of the opinion that the college is not always approachable; however there was sufficient evidence that the college responded well to concerns raised by parents. The college needs to ensure that the confidence it rightly displays in its work does not inadvertently convey the message that the college is being unresponsive. The college works closely with parents to take account of any pupil's special medical needs. A small minority of parents are not happy that their child has the right amount of homework. The inspection team considered that the homework policy was appropriate and implemented accordingly. The college always encourages parents to raise any areas of difficulty or concern. Procedures to support personal study in college are very good.

92. The Friends of St Edward's College association organise highly successful social and fund raising events. Parents help to organise the Sports Celebrity dinner, the Summer Ball, the Christmas Dinner Dance and the Gourmet Dinner. Parents give very generously to the many fundraising activities arranged to support charities and they make a substantial contribution to college funds. Parents are included in the range of representatives of commerce, industry and the professions who give career advice and practice interviews to older students. Several parents support the sports teams and drive the minibus for the Mencap club. The early morning swimming coach is a college parent and several parents have initiated and organised fund-raising events to finance specific projects such as the rugby tour to South Africa and the cricket tour to Barbados. Parents are well represented on the governing body and many are members of the past pupils' association. Parents are well justified in saying that they have high aspirations and expectations for the education of their children and the college responds with a very high level of care, expertise and commitment.

93. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed about their children's progress and are fully involved in the decisions made about their education. Parents are, on the whole, very supportive of the college's efforts on their children's behalf. Those who have concerns are kept in close contact with pastoral staff and those on the senior management team.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

94. The strong leadership provided by the principal and the governing body has been significant in ensuring the college has moved seamlessly through the recent massive structural changes in character, curriculum and governance, maintaining, as one parent expressed, 'the traditions of the college in a modern setting'. The excellent leadership of the principal is very well supported by the recently redefined college leadership team comprising principal, deputy principal, two vice principals and bursar, who together with other senior staff form various teams to manage aspects of the college. Overall the leadership of this senior team has ensured the continuance of high standards of achievement across the college. The heads of school, along with their heads of years, are responsible for curriculum pastorals and building issues related to each key stage. This enables them to have a very good oversight of their respective areas but does lead to some differences in approaches to similar issues within each key stage. A complex but effective structure of meetings has been established in order to ensure good communication between senior management groups.

95. Overall the leadership at middle management level is good. The leadership of subjects is excellent in art and design, business studies, and history and very good in music. It is good in English, mathematics, science, geography, design and technology and physical education. In modern foreign languages it is satisfactory although the lack of an overall department head leads to some inconsistencies of policy implementation and teaching, however, an appointment to this post is imminent. Leadership is unsatisfactory in economics which lacks forward planning leaving the department ill prepared to teach the subject to the highest standards. The leadership of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory leading to a lack of co-ordination across subjects although it is recognised that the current position has the potential to develop information and communication technology effectively across the college. Due to force of circumstances, the frequent changes in personnel have led to unsatisfactory leadership of special educational needs within the college.

96. The governing body is a powerful force on behalf of the college. The skills and qualifications of the members are well used to support the college in its developments. The leadership of the governors in conjunction with the principal provides a clear direction for the college and has promoted developments over the last few years that have enabled the college to sustain and extend achievement amidst the significant disruption of changes of character and building programmes. The change in character now requires the college to deliver the National Curriculum. Overall progress in this respect has been good. However the governing body, due to budgetary constraints and expected curriculum changes, has not moved fast enough and therefore fails to meet its statutory responsibilities with regard to curriculum provision for information and communication technology and design and technology and reporting requirements in Key Stage 3.

97. The governors provide support and challenge to the college. For example, examination results are monitored and pressure brought to bear for improvement. The governors had a significant say in the development of specialist college status and have successfully challenged contractors when the service provided for the college has not met agreed specifications. They play an effective role in supporting good behaviour and commit time, expertise and personal financial resources to the college.

98. The principal compiles a very detailed annual report to governors, which is in essence the college department and aspect development plans. This is supported by a brief school development plan addressing whole school issues. These documents are generally effective in analysing the strengths and weaknesses of aspects of the college life but their effectiveness is reduced as they do not fully describe all the whole college initiatives delivered through the senior management groups, in particular, the planning for curriculum development and the strategies for improving teaching and learning. The annual report also effectively outlines the developments for the major extra-curricular activities and the cross-college themes such as in-service training for all staff, careers education and bursar services. Overall individual departments produce very detailed plans in which costs are identified and success criteria described. These plans contain analyses of strengths and weaknesses to a prescribed format, but are inconsistent in the level of detail. The analysis of examination results, for example, does not identify the reasons for particular levels of performance for individuals of particular groups such as gender or ethnicity or the proposed impact of the analysis on future teaching and learning.

99. The college has commissioned external reviews of leadership, geography, modern foreign languages, design and technology, physical education and assessment, recording and reporting and has produced action plans, identified through the school development plan, to tackle issues raised by these reviews. The plans

are approved by the governing body and, in the main, structural and resources issues have been addressed but some of the more fundamental issues of teaching and learning styles are awaiting action. A good model of department line management by senior staff has very recently been introduced with a focus on attainment, teaching and learning including lesson observations. This has yet to impact fully on the work of all departments. Overall the college is effective in monitoring and identifying strengths, weaknesses and prioritising actions to tackle the majority of issues within available resources.

100. There has been a significant development programme including changes to curriculum and buildings, increased teaching resources, in particular access to computers, and a relocation of rooms into departments blocks in order to bring coherence to the curriculum. This programme has been well thought out and executed and has been very successful in capitalising on opportunities in order to secure effective accommodation for the sixth form. The overall plans have enabled the college to come in line with national requirements although the chosen priorities for development has meant that two key curriculum areas of information and communication technology and design and technology and the physical provision for science are still unsatisfactory. The college is in receipt of additional resources through the standards fund, specific grants, covenants and very successful fund-raising events. The substantial changes have been well managed and resources have been targeted effectively to achieve the intended outcomes. The bursar, his team and all support staff contributed significantly to the excellent management of the recent changes and the smooth day-to-day running of the college. Opportunities to obtain the best service for the least cost are always taken and poor service from external suppliers is rigorously challenged. The college has an excellent financial control and monitoring system. Financial audits are undertaken by the Local Education Authority and a private company. No major issues were raised in the last audits. The Local Education Authority action points were addressed quickly. Principles of best value are well understood and applied assiduously in order to achieve good value for money.

101. Teaching and support staff are well qualified and match the needs of the curriculum. The college has a good balance of experienced and recently qualified teachers. The induction of new staff and initial teacher training programmes are well managed. Effective support and monitoring programmes are in place which build on the local authority and higher education institute services. There is a well managed, comprehensive programme of staff development but the measurement of the impact of in-service training on teaching and learning is not fully developed. The college is successfully progressing a performance management system in line with current expectations. The staff provide an impressive and well supported extra-curricular programme, many have talents in the arts, sport and other areas in addition to their academic role and these talents are well used to support pupils' overall development. Time and effort is given generously by all teaching and support staff and this is much appreciated by pupils and their parents.

102. Overall accommodation is good. Recent refurbishment of the sixth form centre, modern foreign languages, art and design and design and technology blocks along with the relocation of music, the library and subjects into department areas, provides an effective environment for learning for all subjects. There are weaknesses in accommodation as there are insufficient science laboratories and rooms for food and textiles in design and technology. Resources for the curriculum are generous and departments have access to additional resources through a bidding process and from fund-raising events. A number of departments, for example mathematics and modern foreign languages, are under-resourced in terms of practical equipment or enrichment materials, activities and events that would enable teachers to develop more innovative approaches to teaching and help pupils become independent learners. Enrichment programmes are often through extra-curricular activities. The college has committed a significant level of resources and extra-curricular support to pupils with special educational needs but needs to take further steps to ensure that these resources are more clearly targeted to those with the greatest need. Within this context staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good and improving.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

103. St Edward's is a college with many excellent features. In order for the college to capitalise on this position the governors in conjunction with the principal, the teachers and support staff and the pupils must

- (1) Improve teaching and curriculum provision and provide greater opportunities for pupils to capitalise on creative and independent learning skills within the curriculum by:

- a) conducting an audit of current good practice within and beyond the college and using the results of this audit to inform teachers' medium- and short-term planning;
- b) providing greater opportunities for pupils to develop skills of investigation, problem solving, communication and evaluation from Year 7 onwards;
- c) investing in teaching and learning resources and improvements in accommodation in science and design and technology in order to further support opportunities for independent and creative learning;
- d) considering opportunities to increase the breadth of curriculum in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

Paragraph numbers: 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 45, 47, 53, 56, 60, 66, 67, 100, 102, 122, 123, 125, 135, 137, 140, 152, 154, 170, 198, 203, 205, 214, 228, 235, 240.

- (2) Monitor the implementation and impact of all recently developed whole-college initiatives in particular the systems of department support and monitoring to ensure they focus on:
 - a) improving the analysis of pupil assessment for learning as well as test and examination results in order to better target teaching on specific groups, including pupils with special educational needs, within lessons;
 - b) developing a wider range of teaching styles and learning opportunities in all subjects;
 - c) ensuring the statutory requirements for assessment and reporting are implemented.

Paragraph numbers: 45, 47, 67, 80, 82, 85, 98, 99, 116, 122, 138, 139, 141, 150, 173, 193, 205, 219, 220.

- (3) Raise attainment in information and communication technology by:
 - a) providing a curriculum that fully complies with statutory requirements in Key Stage 3;
 - b) taking urgent action to secure the curriculum for the current Year 9 pupils, including clarifying the arrangements for making appropriate assessments at the end of the key stage;
 - c) fully complying with statutory requirements in Key Stage 4, ensuring that all pupils have access to a broad and challenging curriculum;
 - d) taking steps to improve the co-ordination of information and communication technology across the college and the teaching of information and communication technology within subject areas.

Paragraph numbers: 12, 19, 20, 53, 57, 124, 139, 149, 173, 183, 186, 190, 195, 218.

- (4) Raise standards in design and technology by:
 - a) providing a curriculum that fully complies with statutory requirements;
 - b) improve the pupils' skills of evaluation, analysis and communication of ideas to develop their understanding of the design process;

Paragraph numbers: 16, 44, 57, 59, 140, 153, 163.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	168
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	37	31	20	5	0	0

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

Information about the college's pupils

Pupils on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the college's roll	717	243
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free college meals	90	

Special educational needs	Y 7 –Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	0
Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register	16	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last college year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
College data	4.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
College data	0
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	90	70	160

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	90	88
	Girls	70	69	68
	Total	158	159	156
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	99	99	98
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	79	91	81
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	90	89
	Girls	N/a	70	69
	Total	0	160	158
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	N/a	100	99
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	N/a	93	82
	National	31	37	28

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	73	55	128

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	63	71	71
	Girls	52	54	54
	Total	115	125	125
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	College	90	98	98
	National	46.6	90.9	98.5

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	College	51
	National	38.0

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	52	49	101

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	25.9	22.9	24.4	1.0	2.0	1.5
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

International Bacculaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Bacculaureate Diploma and the Percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	College	0	N/a
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	3
Indian	5
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	10
White	920
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	15	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y[7] – Y[13]

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y[7] – Y[13]

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Deployment of teachers: Y[7] – Y[13]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.1
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Average teaching group size: Y[7] – Y[11]

Key Stage 3	27.6
Key Stage 4	24

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	3,685,728
Total expenditure	3,709,795
Expenditure per pupil	3,845
Balance brought forward from previous year	97,402
Balance carried forward to next year	73,335

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	959
Number of questionnaires returned	496

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	61	34	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in college.	65	31	3	0	1
Behaviour in the college is good.	68	29	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	40	8	1	1
The teaching is good.	59	39	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	34	6	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	66	27	5	1	0
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	88	12	0	0	0
The college works closely with parents.	55	35	9	1	0
The college is well led and managed.	73	23	2	0	1
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	26	1	0	2
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	86	13	0	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

The overwhelming response of parents at the meeting and through the questionnaire is very supportive of the school.

While expressing overall satisfaction with the college, a small number of parents raised concerns over: changes to the programme of parents meeting in Years 7 and 8; the quality of provision in design and technology and information and communication technology; specific aspects of provision for special educational needs; and the response of the college to criticism.

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

ENGLISH

104. Standards of attainment in English in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were very high compared with all colleges. They were similar to those gained in the previous year; whilst the results in all three core subjects were all very high, those in mathematics were a little better at the higher levels. In 1999 the English results were also very high for colleges taking pupils from similar backgrounds; although girls achieve slightly better results than boys, the gap is narrower than nationally. The results in 2000 were an improvement: all pupils gained Level 5 or above and 60 per cent gained Levels 7 and 8. Virtually all pupils achieved A*-C grades in both GCSE English and English literature in the last three years; about a third of pupils gained A*/A grades overall, but in 1999 in English literature and in English in 2000, this rose to 43 per cent. Almost all students achieved pass grades in A-level English language and English literature courses in the last three years; the proportion who gained the higher grades (A and B) was above average. The small number of sixth form students who studied for GCSE drama for one year gained very high results, all but one achieving A*/A grades.

105. Work seen in lessons, exercise books and folders is excellent in Years 9 and 11 and above average in Year 13. The majority of pupils are confident, fluent speakers and very considerate listeners. Most can back up the points they make with reasons and evidence from the texts they are studying. Both boys and girls of a full range of ability can work together effectively in pairs and groups to discuss, plan and explore ideas and most can feed back their ideas coherently and clearly to the whole class. A good proportion are articulate and explain points at length and with precision as well as putting points together to argue a case. An able Year 9 class spend the first half of a double period discussing a demanding pre-twentieth-century poem, 'My Last Duchess' by Browning, using a prompt sheet of questions provided by the teacher. By using their own ideas, and in response to challenging questioning by the teacher, they conducted a rigorous debate in the second lesson, refining and deepening their understanding: almost all pupils contributed perceptive and mature points, well rooted in their grasp of the poem's subtle meanings and language. Another Year 9 group very effectively planned and produced short radio programmes in groups on the issue of child soldiers, a topic covered in their assembly, whilst the least able pupils in this year group undertook role-play which successfully extended and deepened their understanding of Taylor's novel, 'Roll of Thunder'. The quality of pupils' and students' oral work in lessons was of a particularly high standard when they were given time to think and discuss informally prior to class discussion and when the teacher nominates pupils to contribute rather than relying on volunteers.

106. The vast majority of pupils enjoy, respond positively and have a very good grasp of the features of the fiction and non-fiction texts which they study, including Shakespeare and pre twentieth-century poetry. As a result of a challenging curriculum and teachers setting high standards, pupils in Year 9 study and understand texts which in other colleges would be part of GCSE courses. In both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, pupils use a range of reading skills confidently so that they can locate information, synthesise points and comment critically on the effects of language. Pupils studying for GCSE produce very good wider reading assignments by comparing an interesting range of difficult texts, including nineteenth-century novels. Similarly, many A-level literature students write mature and original coursework assignments on a wide range of interesting and demanding texts.

107. Almost all pupils in Year 11 write detailed, well-organised and largely accurate assignments for GCSE with clear introductions and conclusions. The best work is of a very high standard in terms of its maturity, originality and structure as well as accuracy. GCSE pupils and A-level students successfully rework their first attempts in writing in order to improve the content, organisation and accuracy of their assignments and in response to valuable, well-informed and detailed marking by their teachers. Sixth-formers write clear, well-organised and thoughtful notes and essays, whilst the best A-level work is perceptive, extended and carefully structured.

108. Pupils' attainment in language skills on entry to the college is above average overall. The combination of good teaching, pupils' hard work and commitment as well as the provision of texts and

activities which are demanding but enjoyable, enables pupils to achieve very well in Key Stages 3 and 4, so that attainment is very high at the ends of both key stages. The very small number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress in response to some extra help and support given to them by their class teachers. Sixth-formers make good progress in tackling the range of demands of their A-level courses; in response to good teaching of interesting and difficult work, their attainment is above average overall.

109. Pupils are very largely effective, mature learners who co-operate well with their teachers and each other. Many are keen and responsive, take their work seriously and sustain their efforts in lessons and work hard at home to consolidate and extend the work in lessons. The good behaviour, positive attitudes and perseverance of pupils successfully support the sustained development of their language skills. Pupils in three different Year 10 classes representing the full range of abilities, supported by a very good prompt sheet, worked hard to grapple with both the text of 'Romeo and Juliet' as well as the techniques of two different film interpretations in preparation for a GCSE media assignment. Year 7 boys and girls worked together enthusiastically and independently in mixed ability groups to prepare short extracts from a play script of 'Treasure Island' for performance to the whole class.

110. The very good rate of pupils' progress in acquiring, developing and deepening their work in English is underpinned by good teaching. It is satisfactory or better in all lessons, good in half and has very good features in a fifth. Good and very good teaching is evenly spread over both Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. The strengths of the teaching are: a high level of subject knowledge, so that it is very well-informed; the high level of difficulty of the texts studied and activities undertaken, so that pupils are required to respond and read critically and improve their writing skills within strict time limits; and very good questioning that obliges pupils to think, offer ideas and points and refine their initial thoughts. Most lessons and especially the A-level courses are supported by high quality printed materials, prompts and written guidance. In addition, pupils are provided with detailed, considered and rigorous feedback on their written work which also indicates the areas for improvement, especially in Key Stage 4 and sixth form. Teachers are good-humoured, enthusiastic about their subject and ensure that there are good relationships between pupils, students and their teachers, so that effective learning takes place. Worthwhile, varied tasks are regularly set for homework and these consolidate and extend pupils' and students' learning in lessons. Teachers contribute an enormous, unstinting amount of time and effort to a wide range of successful extra-curricular activities, which include English clubs, extension work for able pupils in Year 8, seminars for A-level students wanting to study English in higher education, opportunities for public speaking and debating, drama clubs in Key Stage 3 and many drama productions. A drama festival for Year 7 in the summer term, results in high quality work presented to the parents and general public. In the small number of lessons which were satisfactory but not better, pupils and students were required to do less work than their teachers and the pace of the lesson reduced and they learnt at a slower but still sound rate.

111. In this well-managed department, teachers' hard work and immense commitment is well supported so that they provide a consistent curriculum and effective assessment procedures to underpin largely effective teaching and to help pupils to achieve results which are better than could be expected on entry to the college. A great deal has been achieved by the post-holders in the last two years; the strengths of staff are encouraged and harnessed and their contributions valued. Priorities for the future include some additional work on curriculum planning in the light of the National Literacy Strategy and further dissemination of the features of the most effective teaching.

Key Skills: speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum

112. Pupils' above average language skills on entry are developed and extended successfully in a full range of subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4. These language skills effectively support pupils very high attainment in the Key Stage 3 tests taken at the end of Year 9 as well as the very high attainment in GCSE. They are a key reason for pupils achieving very well.

113. Almost all pupils and sixth-formers, including those with special educational needs, are confident, fluent speakers who participate willingly and well in class discussions, pair and group work. Pupils are considerate listeners to their teachers and recognise and value others' points of view; they respond very well and promptly to instructions. They enjoy oral work which is well used in many subjects as a route to learning and many ask sensible and thoughtful questions. Pupils and students can discuss, explain points and express opinions; the significant minority who are articulate are skilled at arguing a case at length as

presentations to their peers. The college's debating society is popular and valued by pupils and students and the college is successful in public speaking competitions.

114. Only a tiny minority of pupils have any problems with reading when they enter the college. The vast majority can successfully understand the materials they meet in lessons and can use a range of reading strategies flexibly. They can largely deduce and infer meaning and synthesise points clearly and succinctly. Most pupils are adept at locating information on the Internet and can extract and successfully use what is relevant to their needs. Pupils study and understand a very good range of demanding fiction and non-fiction texts in their English courses. The proposed improvements to the college library should also help pupils and students to have access to a greater range of resources to support their reading for information and pleasure.

115. Pupils' writing skills are well-developed by the end of Year 9 and continue to be extended and refined in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Subject vocabulary is systematically taught in most departments to deepen pupils' grasp of important concepts. With the exception of mathematics in which too little writing takes place, most subjects help pupils to learn how to write concise notes. Moreover, students and pupils write extended essays and reports; in some subjects, notably history and English, they write effectively in a wide range of forms. By the end of Year 11, virtually all pupils produce well-organised, accurate, detailed assignments. The GCSE written work of the higher attainers is of an excellent standard: it is mature, perceptive and very well-structured. The written work of the abler A-level students is similarly well-researched and original, whilst most sixth-formers write competent essays and notes.

116. The college is in a good position to draw together and disseminate the many effective aspects of its practice in supporting and developing pupils' language skills. The development of a college policy could also be informed by the principles and resources produced by the recent National Literacy Strategy's initiatives in Key Stage 3.

MATHEMATICS

117. The performance of pupils in the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3 in last three years were very high compared with the national average and also when compared with similar colleges. Results are in line with English and science though in mathematics a greater proportion of pupils achieve the highest levels. The average points score in mathematics exceeded the national average by 9.5 points, equivalent to an advantage of three years progress compared to the national average. The performance of both boys and girls is very high in comparison to the national average and the difference was in favour of boys in 1998 but of girls in 1999. National benchmark data shows the results were very high in comparison with similar schools for pupils attaining Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above.

118. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in 1998, 1999 and 2000 is consistently close to 95 per cent, about double the national average. The proportion gaining A* or A grades increased by 11 per cent to almost a half in 1999 but slipped back in 2000 to just over a third. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, reflecting the national pattern in mathematics. However college data shows girls made greater progress than boys in Key Stage 4 in 2000.

119. In 2000, the A-level examination results were very high with 100 per cent pass in mathematics and in further mathematics. Just under three quarters achieved an A or B grade and in further mathematics all six candidates achieved grade A-C with no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. These results show a significant improvement in mathematics from 1998 - 54 per cent A or B grade, and 1999 - 58 per cent A or B grade. These were 10 per cent and 13 per cent respectively above the national averages for those years. Entries for the AS-level were too small to make valid comparisons. The proportion of pupils choosing A-level mathematics and further mathematics is good.

120. Standards on entry were above the average for a comprehensive school in September 2000 with only a small number of pupils indicated as below average ability in mathematics. For earlier years the indicators are similar. Achievement during Key Stage 3 was very good with 71 pupils improving by two levels and 43 pupils improving by three levels with only nine pupils improving by one level. This compares well with the national expected increase of between one and two levels. Sixteen per cent more girls than boys attained the highest two levels. At the end of Key Stage 4 achievement of pupils was very high with all the pupils entered

for the highest level of GCSE entry succeeding and most of those entered at the intermediate level also achieving grade C or above. Achievement in the A-level courses was similarly high.

121. Standards of work seen at each key stage in class and by scrutinising pupils' work were very high. In Key Stage 3 pupils' learning is guided by the scheme of work but as prior knowledge of pupils on entry is now known, a starting point could be chosen which is more appropriate to the groups of pupils in the higher sets. In Year 8 and Year 9 standards attained are very high. At Key Stage 4 standards are also very high. Those who go on to A-level courses in mathematics work to a standard that is well above average. The progress of pupils at each key stage and in the sixth form is very good.

122. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a strong emphasis on numerical aspects of mathematics. Mental calculation is encouraged and most pupils are competent in this. When calculators are used pupils use them sensibly, for instance as a tool for more difficult calculation and sometimes for checking, as evidenced by Year 8 pupils following fraction work and Year 10 to help find factors of a quadratic equation. The full range of the National Curriculum is taught, although the skills of using and applying mathematics are not given sufficient emphasis until Year 11, and pupils achieve a high standard in most aspects. They can make links between areas of mathematics, for instance in forming and solving quadratic equations that involved the manipulation of algebraic fractions. Pupils have a very good vocabulary in all areas of mathematics observed. In Key Stage 3 they can confidently discuss concave and convex shape and use the perpendicular height of a parallelogram to find its area. In Key Stage 4, pupils' ability to quickly grasp newly introduced concepts was tested in a lesson on histograms, where the range of mathematical ideas brought together demanded great concentration. One area in which attainment is not as high is in using and applying mathematics. Pupils' skills in the three strands - problem solving, communication, particularly written, and reasoning, are not well developed by the start of Year 11.

123. Sixth form students build on the firm foundation reflected in the high grades achieved at GCSE. Skills and understanding in algebra are good and are further built up studying the modules covering pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Graphical calculators are used to enhance learning in aspects of the A-level courses but are rarely used to extend learning lower down the college.

124. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, information and communication technology is not well used to enhance learning. The use and application of mathematics is not given due weight until Year 11, making an imbalance in the range of skills taught. The skills and strategies involved in these two important areas are not sufficiently developed to enhance learning and support pupils becoming more independent learners.

125. The quality of teaching overall is good. In Key Stage 3 it is good, ranging from satisfactory to very good, only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. In Key Stage 4 teaching is good, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Post-16, teaching is very good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of pupils' attainment, working and behaviour and these are clearly transmitted to the pupils. This leads to teaching that is usually thorough, of a good pace and often challenging, but the spark of real enthusiasm for mathematics is only apparent in teaching the older pupils. Occasionally aspects of teaching are not sufficiently well planned, leading to teaching that is just satisfactory or unsatisfactory. This was evident in a very small number of lessons where there was confusing use of the whiteboard, poorly drawn or inaccurate diagrams, or too much time spent consolidating work already well learned. In another lesson the teacher made ill-judged assumptions of what would be remembered from work learned several months earlier and without providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to recall the facts. The range of teaching approaches adopted is very effective, especially in relation to examination success. However, insufficient opportunities are provided to extend individual study and encourage more independent learning, as guided in the National Curriculum, in order to enrich the taught curriculum for all pupils. Teachers manage pupils very well in class and pupils respond to all learning situations very well. Main classroom resources are limited to the textbook and worksheets which constrains teaching approaches and learning opportunities. The department has, in the first instance, deliberately invested in textbook resources to support the delivery of the National Curriculum, however the resources needed for more practical and investigative approaches to the delivery of the subject are unsatisfactory. Teachers often use their questioning skills well, particularly to involve many pupils at the start of a lesson and also to assess understanding before moving the lesson on. Pupils with special educational needs each have a satisfactory, if rudimentary, individual education plan for mathematics and a range of support strategies that enable them to make very good progress.

126. Members of the mathematics department are engaged in a range of extra-curricular activities. These include a mathematics club that is available four lunch-times per week. All pupils are entitled to attend and some are required to attend on occasion for extra support. This club could be developed beyond additional study support in order to foster greater enthusiasm for mathematics, for instance through a more structured approach involving strategy games and puzzles that often engage the most able and talented pupils - sometimes leading to a lifetime's pleasure.

127. The department is well managed, and has made significant improvements in the past four years, examination results now being among the best in the college. The head of department leads a committed team and uses their strengths effectively in their shared aim of providing the best possible mathematical education.

128. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and tracking of pupils' progress are both at early stages of development. Insufficient emphasis on these aspects limits the learning programme for the pupils which should include fuller study of the use and application of mathematics, as described in the National Curriculum, as well as maintaining the very high outcomes at public examinations. The department also does not use sufficient aspects of the new technology in order to help to develop pupils as more independent learners, prepare them even more roundly for the adult world and further contribute to fulfilling the college's mission statement.

Numeracy

129. Mathematics is used well by pupils in several other subjects. In Key Stage 3 pupils were observed accurately measuring and marking out their designs in design and technology, interpreting graphs in history, substituting numbers into formulae in cells of a spreadsheet in information and communication technology, using distance-time graphs to calculate speed in physics, drawing and interpreting graphs.

130. In chemistry and in Spanish they were using large numbers for prices. Examples in the sixth form include manipulating equations and calculating gradients of graphs in physics and in economics pupils used percentages and were able to calculate price elasticity of demand using the formulae. Overall, pupils were able to cope well with the mathematical demands in other subjects.

SCIENCE

131. In 2000, standards of attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3, were well above average compared with all colleges and taking the three years from 1998 to 2000 results were also well above average. In 2000 results were well above average in the percentage achieving the levels expected of fourteen-year-olds (Level 5 or above) and well above average at the higher levels (Level 6 or above). In comparison with similar colleges, results were well above average in 1999.

132. At GCSE, all pupils are entered for double award science and the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades was well above average in 1999 and similar to the previous year. Results in 1999 at A*/A were well above average. The results for 2000 showed a 12 per cent fall in pupils achieving A*-C grades in double award science. This fall was not seen in their performance in English or mathematics. In the double award examination pupils scored highest in chemistry and lowest in biology.

133. At A-level the 1998 results for chemistry, physics and biology were well above the national average at the higher grades (A-B). All candidates obtained pass grades (A-E). In 1999 all candidates did not obtain pass grades in biology, chemistry or physics. Candidates obtaining higher grades were well above the national average in chemistry and biology but below the national average in physics. In 2000, although not all candidates obtained pass grades, the performance in physics at higher grades significantly improved and was better than results over the previous three years in chemistry, physics or biology. There was a slight fall in the number of candidates obtaining higher grades in biology and chemistry but all candidates obtained the pass grades.

134. Current standards are well above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form standards are above average in chemistry, physics and biology. Within these overall judgements there are slight variations across Key Stages 3 and 4. These variations are linked to the quality of teaching and in particular to the ability of the teacher to plan stimulating lessons and use their subject knowledge to extend the learning of the most able pupils. Pupils in a lower Year 10 set were able to extend both their own and the whole class's knowledge and understanding about trends in the groups of the periodic table by responding to the challenge of delivering group presentations, which they researched and prepared for homework and in class. In contrast, pupils in a high ability Year 10 set failed to extend their understanding of the effect of

resistance and potential difference on electron flow because of the teacher's inability to explain this with appropriate models or examples.

135. Overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical and life processes, living things and materials are above average. They are also able to perform experiments in a safe, sensible and effective manner. A group of mixed ability Year 9 pupils were able to use ticker-tape machines to investigate constant speed and acceleration and could explain why it was necessary to compensate for friction. Pupils in Year 11 had a good knowledge of the Electromagnetic Spectrum and were able to describe the differences between longitudinal and transverse waves. Sixth form students are able to describe the role of the sodium/potassium ion pump in nerve transmission in biology, demonstrate a clear understanding of electrophillic substitution in chemistry and understand the derivation of Young's modulus and can use the equation to solve a range of problems. Investigative skills are developed as an integral part of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work and pupils demonstrate an ability to predict, plan and observe well. Skills of analysis and evaluation are less well developed. Analysis of work showed that by Key Stage 4 pupils generally have very good investigative skills and can apply scientific knowledge to effectively explain their predictions and conclusions, but their ability to evaluate is less effective. Standards of handwriting and the presentation of notes are never less than satisfactory and often very good.

136. Pupils' attitude to work is generally very good, they show interest in their work and are keen to learn. They are well behaved and are courteous to each other and their teachers. Relationships with other pupils and their teachers are very good. They are able to collaborate and work effectively and efficiently in small groups, for example during practical work or when preparing a presentation.

137. Overall the quality of teaching is good at all stages with notable examples of very good teaching. Teaching in the sixth form was good or very good with no significant difference between subjects. The range of teaching styles was often limited with the predominant method being whole class teacher led. The use of effective questioning to involve and often challenge pupils, together with the pupils' attitude to learning, ensured that this was an effective method. This enabled the quality of learning to be good for most pupils. When teachers used a wider range of teaching methods, pupils responded with greater involvement, motivation and enthusiasm. Planning is good and identifies clear learning outcomes. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups in Key Stage 3 but there was rarely evidence of the work being matched to individual need in the lesson content or resources used. Although differentiated assessment objectives are identified in planning, teachers do not always make effective use of these to assess learning. Pupils are set in Key Stage 4 and although work is differentiated between sets it is rarely differentiated within sets. Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified in planning and learn at a similar rate to other pupils, making good progress against their prior learning, because of the good support from the class teachers. Sixth form students also occasionally provide support in class.

138. Because of insufficient laboratory space, the majority of science teaching takes place out of specialised accommodation. When lessons do occur in laboratories, every effort is made to ensure that practical activities take place. Practical activities are skilfully and safely planned with help from good quality technical support. In Key Stage 3 scientific enquiry was often integrated into the science teaching. For example, Year 9 pupils' analysis skills were developed following a chemistry experiment to determine the melting point of salol. This was not a feature at Key Stage 4 and investigations are generally taught in isolation as assessment activities for examination coursework. Homework is regularly set and used effectively to extend and/or reinforce learning. Work is regularly marked for both content and spelling. Comments are used occasionally but are usually congratulatory and fail to move learning forward. Marking policies are inconsistent in Key Stage 4 across chemistry, physics and biology, although the marking of coursework investigations is better. Overall the quality and use of assessment is satisfactory and regular summative assessment is a good feature at all key stages but insufficient use is made of this information to track progress, identify under-performance and provide strategies for improvement. Target setting is not yet a well-established practice although some initial progress has been made in physics.

139. The chemistry, biology and physics departments are well managed on a day-to-day basis by the three department heads. There are clear but independent policies, schemes of work and risk assessments. They operate as three autonomous departments and despite two of the heads of department having responsibility for each key stage, there are still problems of consistency of approach in a number of areas across the key stages relating to policies and schemes of work. There are many examples of good practice in each department but few opportunities to share ideas. This has been recognised by the college's senior management and as an interim measure, the deputy principal has recently taken responsibility as line manager for the three departments. An action plan has been agreed and whole science department meetings

have been initiated recently to address these issues. Resources are satisfactory and used well, but there are inadequate information and communication technology resources to support teaching and to develop the use of information and communication technology in experimental work. Staff are well qualified and have a wide range of experience. They are generally well matched to the curriculum but some of the classes in Key Stage 3 are large, especially in Year 9, and this makes it difficult to address the needs of all pupils. This is particularly difficult when pupils are carrying out scientific investigations. There is insufficient specialist accommodation and the quality of the existing junior laboratories is poor and they are in need of refurbishment. This results in an unacceptable percentage of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 taking place in ordinary classrooms and a clear impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

140. In seeking improvement, the department needs to operate more as an integrated team and not as separate departments. Whole department policies for information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy and safety are not yet developed. Existing marking policies do not provide a consistent approach to assessment with a focus on target setting and marking which moves learning forward. The department does not have an effective system to track progress, set targets and identify under-performance. The quality of teaching and learning is not sufficiently monitored in order to identify good practice and to ensure the use of a wider range of teaching and learning styles. Key Stages 3 and 4 schemes of work do not ensure a cohesive approach with a particular emphasis on differentiation, creating more opportunities for independent learning and ensuring that scientific enquiry is integrated into the teaching of attainment targets 2, 3 and 4. The revision of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work must also consider the implications of Curriculum 2000. Accommodation needs should be reviewed and opportunities to refurbish existing laboratories and provide more laboratory accommodation investigated. There is insufficient information and communication technology equipment and opportunities for inclusion of information and communication technology are not identified in the schemes of work.

ART AND DESIGN

141. In Key Stage 3, overall, standards of achievement are beyond National Curriculum expectations. Despite some inconsistency of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 for the past two years, the judgements made at the end of the college year, July 2000, are representative of the college's intake with three quarters of pupils working within and beyond national expectations.

142. All GCSE Year 11 and A-level Post-16 examination results for the past three years are well above the national averages. High grades are consistently achieved.

143. In Key Stage 3 standards of work seen are very good, pupils quickly learn to use 2B pencils and coloured pencils in the correct application of shading, tone and perspective. Such skills are retained by pupils and developed over the years in progressively demanding tasks. Gifted and talented Key Stage 3 pupils are beginning to be identified, but they are not always appropriately grouped and given more challenging tasks.

144. At the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, standards are well above average. All examination pupils have an extensive knowledge of a wide range of artists, e.g. William Blake, Franz Marc, Jackson Pollock, Van Gough and Goya, as introduced at Key Stage 3, and they can apply the styles and techniques of such artists in exciting project work.

145. Sketch-books are most appropriately used by all pupils to collect and retain information, to try out ideas in lessons and as homework. These books quickly become artefacts in their own right, and subsequently are valued and respected by everyone.

146. At all times, pupils become absorbed with their tasks, show very high motivation levels and have sensible and mature attitudes to their own work, each other's, teachers and equipment. This is further evident in the high numbers voluntarily continuing with project work after college. However, it is important for these pupils to be appropriately supervised.

147. The overall quality of teaching and learning in all classes is very good. Without exception, teachers provide a structure to art education that is built upon a systematic development of the necessary basic art

skills and techniques. For example, at the commencement of Year 7, pupils show a full knowledge and application of the light and shade on spherical and cylindrical objects. Teaching always ensures a sense of purpose in all projects, whether in quick 30-second warm up sessions in the Post-16 life drawing classes or the longer three-dimensional projects set over several months.

148. Teachers achieve a good working atmosphere in a conducive environment with a most extensive display of pupils' work. This allows younger pupils to be influenced by the high quality work of older pupils. Indeed, high expectations are set for all pupils. The teacher's own high levels of artistic competence are shown in demonstrations and explanations that pupils always listen to with undivided attention. The understanding and use of appropriate technical vocabulary is also a positive feature of lessons.

149. The purpose built suite of rooms provides experience in drawing, painting, printing, ceramics and three-dimensional work. However, there is restricted opportunity for pupils to experience textiles as a media for artistic exploration. The heater fan and wood grained worktops in the ceramics room are potential health and safety hazards. There is a sufficient range of text books but no opportunity to use information and communication technology within the department as a creative and resource tool. Gallery and museum visits are organised by the department but particularly encouraged as private study. Consequently, a large number of pupils make such visits during their own time which contributes significantly to their understanding and their high standards.

150. The adequate curriculum planning that exists does not refer to the new National Curriculum Programmes of Study. An efficient Key Stage 3 assessment system is in place at the end of each half term but the new National Curriculum levels are not applied as summative assessments at the end of each year and this is unsatisfactory. Key Stage 4 and Post-16 assessment is continual and effective.

151. The subject is very well managed by a very experienced head of department who is fully aware of current issues and the need to apply changes to further move the department forward.

152. The department is very successful in achieving very good results and creating a very secure learning environment for pupils to achieve high motivation levels and very positive relationships. Immediate attention must be given to the health and safety issues in the ceramics room and appropriate supervision of extra-curricular activities. The Key Stage 3 planning is not clearly linked to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and this is a weakness. Coverage of the Programmes of Study is insufficient and the lack of use of the new levels for end of year assessments is unsatisfactory. Curriculum planning and classroom organisation does not give sufficient attention to planning for the needs of individuals as opposed to planning by outcome. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology to enhance learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

153. Standards in the 2000 statutory teacher assessments were well above the national average. A significant majority of pupils achieved Level 6 and above. Girls results were very high compared to the national average whilst those of boys were above the national average. Examination results are consistently high and significantly above national A*-C standards at both Key Stage 4 and A-level. Of the 42 pupils who have taken GCSE resistant materials in the last two years, all but two have achieved A*-C and a significantly higher proportion than nationally gained A*/A grades. A small but growing number of students sit A-level examinations and standards of attainment are very high with two-thirds of students, twice the national average, obtaining high level passes. The average points score at A-level in 2000 compares well with results in other subjects across the college. There is no provision for food technology or textiles and this is unsatisfactory.

154. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 3 were average overall, however this masks considerable range of attainment between different aspects of the subject. Pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs, are confident and capable in using a range of tools and techniques to manufacture products using electronic components, wood, metal and plastic. Their understanding of the properties of materials, knowledge of safe working practices, and their ability to apply these to tasks within the workshops strongly enhanced their manufacturing skills. This contributed significantly to attainment. Attainment, however, was markedly less strong in analysing existing products, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the products that they had made, and in their use of freehand sketching and drawing to record how ideas develop and designs evolve. As a result the strengths in making are offset by the weaker skills in evaluation, analysis and communication of ideas so that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average overall.

155. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average and the GCSE course is particularly strong in the development of manufacturing skills, enabling pupils to produce storage items in wood, metal and plastics that are accurately and well made to high quality standards. Computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is used effectively to support manufacture and develop pupils' awareness of modern manufacturing methods. Attainment overall is good although designing skills still show some weaknesses and average and less able pupils find it difficult to sketch and draw their design ideas to show the development of their thinking and understanding of how the product might work. Pupils draw heavily on their teachers for support and guidance, and some are over dependent on their help.

156. Standards of work seen in the sixth form are very high. Attainment in A-level classes is particularly strong in the use of CAD/CAM, this is a significant strength in the course and enables students to produce exceptionally high quality clocks and timepieces with precision and accuracy and to professional standards. Teachers' detailed knowledge and experience of the examination syllabus is used effectively to support and direct students to achieve at the highest levels.

157. The vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 enjoy designing and making products, and respond very positively to opportunities to create clocks and toothbrush holders which they later use in their homes. Productivity is particularly high in lessons where pupils are able to use computers to assist the design and manufacturing process. Year 7 make promotional display units using Microsoft Word to create and print their designs incorporating into them simple circuits which enable lights to flash. Pupils in Key Stage 3 apply their numeracy skills to calculate shape, area, and quantity when producing plans for manufacture. Older pupils are able to combine their knowledge of material properties, to calculate speed and feed rates when using CAD/CAM programmes and workshop machinery.

158. Behaviour in and around the workshops is very good, and pupils take care of the tools and materials that they are given and work co-operatively with their teachers. Older pupils respect their teachers, and the technician, and spoke openly and appreciatively of the help and assistance that they give to support them in lessons and extra-curricular activities. All staff are involved in a range of activities such as the Da Vinci and Artisan clubs, A-level students annual visit to the Design Museum, the development of the Arkwright Scholarship Scheme and visits to companies. All of these activities enrich and build on the formal learning in lessons, and provide good opportunities for some pupils to begin to investigate the broader aspects of the subject.

159. Teaching in Key Stage 3 was satisfactory or better in all but one lesson and good or better in half of the lessons seen. Good teaching challenged pupils to think and analyse information drawing on data, text and diagrams to help them identify where components fit on a printed circuit board. Good teaching also enabled pupils to work co-operatively in pairs undertaking complementary roles safely and confidently to use the pillar drill to carry out a series of drilling operations to manufacture toothbrush holders. In the one lesson that was judged unsatisfactory, pupils were insufficiently challenged or stimulated by tasks and wasted both time and effort. Teaching at Key Stage 4 was satisfactory. Sixth form teaching was very good and students were challenged by the complexities of a computer aided design software package but worked with determination to create their designs using professional Computer Numerical Control machines (CNC) to manufacture components in quantity.

160. Procedures for involving pupils in assessing their own attainment are good, although average to low ability pupils in Key Stage 3 need more direction and support in determining the specific actions they need to do to improve the quality of drawing and the rigour and depth of evaluation.

161. Resources are generally good although due to the increased use of CAD/CAM facilities in Key Stage 3 there are insufficient modern Computer Numerical Control machines to meet the demands or needs of the revised curriculum.

162. Overall management of the department is good. Well thought out documentation on marking work, setting homework, health and safety and differentiation provide a very good and clear guide for less experienced members of the team. Resource management is very good within the constraints of the budget and lessons and there are sufficient resources to enable pupils to have access to tools and materials. The department is well led and the staff team is very committed and supportive of students and work hard to ensure they are successful.

163. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to use the full range of compliant materials, and consequently the breadth of study does not meet the statutory requirements of the Programmes of Study for design and technology. Although planning is at an early stage to enable pupils to work with textiles and will eventually address the issues, the current situation is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 only a quarter of pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 study the subject. Consequently non-compliance with the statutory requirement for all pupils to study design and technology, is a serious cause for concern which the governors and management of the college need to consider in the very near future.

GEOGRAPHY

164. Standards of attainment in the 2000 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average. A significant majority of pupils attained Level 6 or above, although fewer pupils achieved Level 8 and slightly more pupils attained below the national expectation of Level 5 than in other subjects in the college. There was no significant difference in the proportion of boys and girls achieving Level 6 or above, although the average point score for girls exceeded that of boys in the same ratio as nationally.

165. At GCSE, results have been well above national averages for the past three years. In 1998, 100 per cent attained grades A*-C. However, in 1999 and 2000, although the number of candidates achieving A* and A grades has been very high compared with national averages, the proportion of pupils attaining below grade C has risen. This has led the department to consider the necessity for lower tier entry, although there is confidence that through targeting of grade C/D borderline candidates and provision of additional planned support, that all pupils will attain within grades A*-C in 2001.

166. At A-level, results at the higher grades A-B and at grades A-E have been well above the national average over the past three years. In the 2000 examination 50 per cent achieved higher grades and 95 per cent between grades A-E. There was a similar proportion of boys and girls achieving the higher grades in 2000. Numbers opting to study geography at A-level has remained relatively stable with a slight increase in 2000, which is better than the national picture. In the last examination year pupils achieving grade C at GCSE attained a similar grade at A-level which points to good progress in the sixth form.

167. In work seen during the inspection the standards reached by the majority of pupils were average or above average with a substantial minority achieving well above the national expectation at Key Stage 3. Year 9 pupils produced some high quality extended writing analysing the effects of ageing on the population and on migration factors, eco-systems and societal interaction. Standards of attainment in problem solving in issue based work on industrial development was of a high standard. Year 8 pupils demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of issues related to land use and the environment and used pictorial, map-based and written sources to find information on the functions and development of settlements. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, use geographical vocabulary with accuracy, for example when relating complex farm descriptions to systems diagrams.

168. Attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Higher attaining pupils produce good quality coursework based on fieldwork using statistical methods to analyse their collected fieldwork data. Year 11 pupils displayed good understanding of the combination of physical, human and economic factors which influence industrial location. They interpret maps and graphs, make clear notes and construct flow charts and annotated diagrams. Attainment in class is lower when occasionally pupils simply transmit information from text books, atlas, or teacher-dictated notes. All pupils handle data and mapwork confidently, and use these skills in a variety of contexts.

169. The overall attainment of students in Year 13 is above average. Many students produce good quality extended writing in response to examination style questions. Their folders are well organised with clear, detailed notes, diagrams and charts which should prove to be a valuable revision resource. While a minority of Year 12 pupils have yet to develop writing styles which marshal the range of information required for the examination, all show good knowledge and understanding of geographical processes and relationships, as for example in their work on fluvial deposition, where they explained the relationship between meanders and the growth of flood plains and engaged in complex enquiry work leading to well written conclusions.

170. The quality of teaching is usually good and some is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Although there were some weaker features of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, there was also some very good teaching at each key stage. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and all aspects of the geography curriculum are covered at pace, with precision, and with careful regard to the progress made by pupils of all abilities. Teachers' recapitulation of recent work at the beginning of lessons and of key learning points at the end assists pupils to recall and consolidate earlier learning and to make good progress in most lessons. The best lessons are characterised by brisk pace, challenging tasks, enthusiasm for the subject, good use of topical and relevant examples, and skilful allocation of time to different activities. This was well-illustrated in a Year 8 lesson where the teacher provided a clear explanation on farming processes, engaging pupils in contributing to the development of a systems diagram on the overhead projector, used probing and targeted questions to ensure understanding, and provided a range of tasks of progressive complexity requiring pupils to apply their knowledge in a range of contexts. Good support is provided for pupils experiencing difficulty with their work, including one example of a sixth form geography learning mentor assisting a pupil with special educational needs. Pupils are very well prepared for the examination at GCSE and A-level, and additional support is offered at the weekly geography club for pupils at all key stages. When pupils are given opportunities to organise their own learning, as in some enquiry homework at Key Stage 3 and in coursework for GCSE and A-level, they show initiative and enterprise and produce some high quality work. Often good use is made of direct teaching of geography and teachers ensure progress of pupils through the Programmes of Study. However, too many lessons are teacher led and do not give opportunities for independent learning. Some work on geographical skills at the start of Key Stage 3 is repetitive of skills learned in the primary school for some pupils who are capable of faster progress through this aspect of the curriculum and this is unsatisfactory. Teachers' marking is completed regularly and conscientiously but the level of feedback to pupils and guidance on how to improve their work is inconsistent.

171. Pupils concentrate well, think carefully about their work and show commitment to high standards of presentation and explanation. They deploy map skills effectively, show effort in all tasks, pose questions to seek clarification, and have very positive attitudes to the subject. They respond well to the pace and challenge of teaching and behaviour is always very good.

172. The new head of department provides good leadership for the department with good day-to-day management of resources and administration. Revised schemes of work at all levels provide clear guidance to teachers on learning approaches, assessment and the need for differentiated work, and have a clear focus on progression. Strengths include the provision of planned professional development opportunities for all members of the department on issues related to the development plan, for example, 'Raising Standards at GCSE', 'ICT in Geography'. The delegation of particular areas for development, such as Key Stage 3 fieldwork, to specified members of the department; the focus on standardisation of teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 and the ongoing evaluation of schemes of work and teaching approaches at departmental meetings are also strengths.

173. The department has not yet developed strategies for the monitoring of classroom teaching in order to improve the variety of teaching and learning styles and the consistency of marking and level of feedback to pupils. There is insufficient emphasis, in otherwise conscientious marking, on what pupils need to do to improve their work in geography. There is also insufficient opportunity for pupils to make use of information and communication technology and video resources in order to enliven provision in the subject.

HISTORY

174. Standards of attainment in the 2000 statutory teacher assessments were well above the national average. A significant majority of pupils reached standards above Level 6. The proportion of boys achieving at Level 5 or below was greater than that of girls while the proportion achieving the higher grades was slightly lower. The department is making good progress in developing strategies to raise further the standard achieved by boys.

175. At GCSE the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average in each of the past three years, the vast majority of candidates gaining within A*-C. In the 2000 examination, 23 out of

82 candidates achieved A* or A grades and 90.4 per cent achieved within grades A-C. The change to coursework on Vietnam motivated students, particularly boys and the higher attaining pupils were able to access the highest levels, while some lower attaining pupils improved by two grades on previous expectations. The provision of high quality guides to examination success and well-attended voluntary revision sessions, targeted at the potential grade A* and the C/D borderline candidates played a significant role in raising standards in the 2000 GCSE examination.

176. At A-level, in 2000 results were close to the national average, in 1999 they were above the national average, while in 1998 they were below the national average. Numbers choosing to study history at A-level have almost doubled since 1998. In 2000, 35 per cent gained grades A-B, and 89 per cent grades A-E. Structured examination preparation guidance, history club and an Easter holiday revision session supported good attainment, particularly for those who regularly attend the voluntary sessions. In the A-level special papers for history two students passed and the third narrowly missed the pass grade. Achievement at A-level in lessons is very good.

177. Standards in work seen at Key Stage 3 were well above national expectations and pupils achieve very well. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate very good historical knowledge and communicate it effectively both orally and in high quality extended writing. They perform at a very high level in all aspects of the National Curriculum Programme of Study and their attainment against the level descriptors is very good. They show very good understanding of interpretations and representations of history, as in the hotly contested debate passing judgement on interpretations of Mary Tudor's reign. They analyse historical evidence and communicate findings effectively, engage thoughtfully in a consideration of historical issues, and respond to the very good teaching which challenges thinking skills at a high level. Thoughtful essays explaining how movement of people and improvements in transport brought about change between 1750 and 1900 provide excellent examples of pupils' understanding and ability to engage in synoptic and analytical work at a very high level.

178. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is well above the national average. Pupils are able to explain historical situations and analyse historical issues such as how Hitler gained and consolidated his power in Germany after 1933. They show initiative in research and display perceptive understanding of the contribution of the attitudes of young people to the growth of the Peace Movement in the USA, in their coursework on Vietnam. They understand a wide range of historical concepts, use a range of evidence, and demonstrate very good understanding of complex historical terminology.

179. Achievement of students in the current Year 13 is well above the national average. Pupils show high levels of knowledge and understanding and give clear written and oral explanations for complex historical events, such as the causes of the Cuban Missile crisis and its significance for super-power relations. Year 12 pupils used structured and analytical essay plans to provide high quality class presentations on threats to Henry VIII's throne, and completed self-evaluations of their presentations against the requirements of the new AS course. Standards are very high for this stage in the course.

180. The consistently high quality of teaching is a major strength in history and this enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make very good progress. At Key Stage 3 teaching ranges from good to excellent. At Key Stage 4 and at A-level all lessons were very good or excellent, with one exception at A-level where the teaching was satisfactory but did not exploit the links between the historical content and the teaching of essay writing skills. A major focus of the department has been the development of teaching and learning styles and a wide variety of approaches, and these are used to very good effect to stimulate pupils' thinking and avid interest and enthusiasm for the subject and lead to high standards of achievement. In every lesson pupils are engaged in exciting and thought provoking activities. For example, in Year 9 when pupils worked in groups to draw up a campaign action plan for or against the building of the railway, a process to which they brought a high level of knowledge and understanding. Classroom management is excellent. The ethos is inclusive and caters for the needs of all pupils. Even in smaller classrooms teachers engage pupils in a variety of carefully structured groups to support lower attaining pupils. Teachers engage pupils in debate, role-play, analysis of sources, and high quality presentations to the class. The supportive, disciplined and lively atmosphere provided by teachers allows pupils to maintain a clear focus on tasks, and to reach a high level of historical understanding and independence in their learning. Teaching leads pupils to demonstrate very good organisational and communication skills in posing and answering historical questions, oral presentations and written work. Teachers' marking provides a very good level of feedback to pupils on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve, as does verbal feedback during class activities and presentations. The use of homework is very good and always linked clearly to class work ensuring pupils consolidate or extend their knowledge and understanding in history.

181. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good at all levels and pupils show keen interest and enthusiasm for their work. They show initiative in research tasks and are keen to make contributions in

class. In all classes pupils are clearly enjoying their study of history. The purposeful collaborative work in which they are often engaged makes a significant contribution to their personal and social development. History is an increasingly popular subject choice at A-level and GCSE and many pupils express their appreciation of the teaching of the subject and their own learning.

182. Leadership and management are excellent. Significant and successful effort has been focused on improving teaching and learning since the appointment of the head of department in 1999. The discussion of good lessons in history department meetings, the structured process of departmental review, the sharing of classroom activities and resources, and the department's involvement in a range of professional development opportunities related directly to the development plan provide evidence of vibrant and successful teamwork.

183. To further improve the very good provision the department should seek opportunities to make use of information and communication technology at all levels and build opportunities for historical field work at Key Stage 3.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

184. Standards of attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) reported in the 2000 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the national average. Girls did better than boys. However the standards of attainment observed in Key Stage 3 during the inspection do not match these teacher assessments as they were only in line with national averages in communicating information and modelling and below in measurement and control. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in information and communication technology by the end of Key Stage 3.

185. During the inspection the college was unable to produce substantial evidence to demonstrate pupils' previous achievements in Key Stage 3 or 4. This was partially due to the loss of information, which occurred during the installation of the new information and communication technology facilities.

186. In Key Stage 3 lessons pupils demonstrate good information and communication technology knowledge, skills and understanding of communicating information for their age. They have a confident approach to the technology and can navigate their way around the college systems proficiently. Younger pupils are readily able to access subject information available on the main network. They have gained a good knowledge of some of the key software packages that the college uses in communicating information and spreadsheets. By the end of the key stage pupils' knowledge and experience of measurement and control is very limited. The current Year 9 pupils have not yet had the sustained exposure to the new college systems that the younger pupils have had.

187. Pupils make poor progress as they move through Key Stage 4. By the end of the key stage the standards overall are below national expectations. As there is no direct teaching programme, there is too much variability in what pupils can learn and do as a result of the opportunities provided by different subjects. All pupils are aware of basic information and communication technology tools such as word processing, communicating using e-mail, methods of researching including the use of the Internet, and using spreadsheets. The skills and understanding of a large number of pupils are not sufficiently advanced in these areas. Many pupils are not aware of the range of information and communication technology applications expected in the National Curriculum.

188. The standards of attainment in the sixth form vary from unsatisfactory to very good. Standards in lessons in the new courses introduced into Year 12 are good. The excellent resources and the expert tuition of the teachers enable pupils to develop skills in presentation and desktop publishing. Sixth-formers largely constructed the very impressive College Web Site during the last academic year. In contrast pupils knowledge of information and communication technology applications in everyday activities is very limited, particularly in Year 13. Many older pupils are aware of, and are concerned about, their limited knowledge and expertise in this subject.

189. The college does not fully teach the pupils' statutory entitlement in Key Stage 3. Whilst pupils in Years 7 and 8 have discrete information and communication technology lessons the arrangements for Year 9 are unsatisfactory. The college does not provide for the pupils' statutory curriculum entitlement at Key Stage

4. The access to and support for pupils at an individual level is very good. The college operates an open access policy to the computer suites out of college hours and pupils make very good use of it. This enables many students to share ideas, learn new skills and techniques and improve their information and communication technology understanding.

190. The contribution of subject departments to pupils' information and communication technology capability is very variable. In design and technology for instance there is a clear programme of work, incorporating computer-aided design and manufacture, for older pupils. This enables them to use the technology to produce work of a quality not possible through other methods. Pupils undertake information and communication technology work in lessons in such subjects as English, history, geography and politics. The use of information and communication technology in lessons in mathematics, languages, the sciences and the arts is minimal, and this is often linked to a lack of access to resources. The imminent developments related to Language College status, and the increased reliability of the new central computer facilities, should help to improve this situation. In many subjects, but particularly geography, pupils are often encouraged to use the Internet or to use computers for research for coursework and homework, which many of them do in their own time.

191. The attitude of pupils of all abilities to information and communication technology is a strength. Pupils of all ages bring an interest and an enthusiasm to their work, which enables them to readily acquire new knowledge and skills. Behaviour both in lessons and in open access times is impeccable. Many pupils devote considerable time outside lessons using college or personal resources. They are adept at learning from one another and show considerable maturity in their approach. In lessons they are attentive, receptive and apply themselves to the tasks they are given. They are quick to offer help and assistance to others.

192. The quality of teaching in the lessons in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form is good. Teachers have very good knowledge and plan and teach lessons efficiently. The new facilities provide an excellent resource for teaching. Basic information and communication technology skills are well taught in Key Stage 3, and appropriate technical vocabulary is introduced. The aims of lessons are clear and understood by pupils, and expectations are high. Relationships with pupils are good; time is used very effectively. Lessons are exciting where the tasks offered to pupils have real relevance, for instance Year 13 pupils studying politics had the opportunity to use radio, television, newspapers and computers to study the unfolding drama of the American presidential election.

193. In 2000, the college reported end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessment levels to parents, although the statutory requirements were not met as comparative data was not supplied with the pupils' reports. Plans to make that assessment this year, now that Year 9 information and communication technology lessons have been withdrawn, are unclear. The college does not fulfil the requirement to report to parents of Key Stage 4 pupils the progress that is made in information and communication technology, nor does it currently have robust arrangements to gather that information. Satisfactory assessment arrangements have been introduced to complement the revised scheme of work in Years 7 and 8 although little has been done to ensure that assessments inform future work. Good assessment arrangements have been put in place to support the new courses, which have been introduced into the sixth form. The college has rightly devised an Internet and e-mail policy to ensure the proper use of resources, and to protect the welfare of pupils. The current arrangements place some restrictions on the ability of some pupils, mainly sixth-formers, to satisfactorily complete their work.

194. The senior management of the college has a clear vision for the development of information and communication technology, and understands what is required to raise the current standards. It has developed ambitious plans to improve resources, including significant developments as part of the successful Language College bid. The first phases of this improvement have been completed. Inevitably there have been difficulties during the transition. In the last academic year the college suffered significant delays and hardware problems which not only affected its ability to offer continuous and reliable access for pupils and departments but which also frustrated other management initiatives designed to improve the information and communication technology curriculum. The Director of information and communication technology has done exceptionally well to get the new sixth form courses established, as well as managing the transition of resources and all that it entails. The college has well-established plans for the further training of all staff through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF).

195. In order to improve significantly the provision for information and communication technology the

following issues need to be resolved. The management of the information and communication technology curriculum is currently inadequate and fails to raise standards of attainment. The provision for the current Year 9 pupils is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for making appropriate assessments at the end of the key stage are inadequate. The co-ordination of, and the support for, the information and communication technology work delivered by subject departments are unsatisfactory. The experience for pupils in Key Stage 4 is insufficiently robust and challenging, is not well matched to their needs and does not fully comply with statutory requirements. The monitoring of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

196. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment reflected in the statutory teacher assessments are well above the national average in both French and Spanish. Girls do considerably better than boys, especially in Spanish. Standards in the 1999 GCSE examinations, and in recent years in general, have also been well above the national average in each subject. Boys tend to perform less well than girls at GCSE, particularly at the higher A* and A grades. There has been a significant decline recently in the numbers of students studying two languages during Key Stage 4. In the A-level examinations, French results have been below or in line with national averages. Results in Spanish have usually been below average and were well below in 1999.

197. Standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 3 during the inspection were at levels above the national expectations of Level 4/5, and in some cases well above. Pupils quickly grasp and learn new structures. Writing is a considerable strength at this key stage. Pupils are able to produce neat and accurate exercises and paragraphs, where the range of tenses is good, and in some cases remarkably so for this stage. They understand spoken and written extracts of the foreign language which are made up of familiar words. When asked to use the target language, they cope well with the work set, though it is rare to hear them use the foreign language in a spontaneous manner. One notable exception was observed in a lesson where pupils participated fully and enthusiastically, asking permission in Spanish to speak English and often completing statements begun by the teacher.

198. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of work seen were generally in line with national expectations and at others above. The accuracy and length of written work, as well as the solid acquisition of grammatical knowledge, are a strength in this key stage. Pupils are able to understand quite extensive spoken and written passages of the foreign language, though at the expense of the accuracy and fluency of pronunciation and speech. It is again rare to find them using the target language in the classroom unless specifically asked to do so, and a number are less willing to contribute to lessons during these years.

199. The standard of work seen in the sixth form was ranged from satisfactory to very good. All students were able to follow lessons conducted entirely in the target language. Writing and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are again strong features of the students' work. The higher attaining students are able and eager to speak the foreign language with considerable confidence and fluency, and they produce highly accurate, lengthy and sophisticated compositions. There are, however, a number of weaker members in each of the various groups and they tend to remain quiet during lessons unless skilfully handled by teachers. For example, in a Year 12 Spanish lesson, students read and discussed a passage on the television programme 'Big Brother' and then worked in pairs to prepare a dialogue in which one of them was interviewed with a view to being a participant in the programme. Outcomes in this lesson were excellent.

200. In all years, behaviour and attitudes to the subject are never less than satisfactory and usually good or very good. Pupils are almost invariably attentive, polite and delightful to talk to. Where attitudes were only satisfactory, it was usually due to passivity and reticence, particularly in some Key Stage 4 classes.

201. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory though it was good or very good in several lessons observed across all key stages. All teachers are well qualified and able to teach all ages and abilities. Their subject knowledge is very good, and they teach the basic skills well. Many lessons observed were taught entirely in the target language. In Key Stage 3 teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to excellent. In the excellent lesson, the teacher's approach, pace and control swept the pupils along at a breathtaking pace. In Key Stage 4, teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson but satisfactory or better in the other four classes observed. Teaching in the sixth form was very good in one case and satisfactory in the remaining four

lessons seen.

202. In the best lessons, there are a number of teaching techniques that have a significant impact on pupils' learning. Planning sometimes includes an initial sharing of objectives, a variety of skills and activities and a careful targeting of pupils' abilities. When this happens, pupils understand what they have to do and what they have achieved by the end of the lesson. They are alert, kept on their toes and able to participate in the lesson from beginning to end. Some teachers take care to consolidate work before extending pupils' knowledge. This helps pupils to feel secure in their acquisition of structures before moving on to activities that provide an essential challenge. There are also examples of particularly imaginative activities, as in a Year 11 French lesson where groups of pupils were asked to discuss different features of an oral presentation given by one pupil. They thereby contributed themselves to the assessment of the work and consequently were helped to understand how to achieve the higher marks in GCSE oral examinations. Relationships between teachers and pupils are almost always positive. In two Spanish classes, excellent use was made of the school's merit system when the teacher awarded points to pupils throughout the lesson whenever they produced a particularly good answer.

203. In contrast, many lessons, even some of those where teaching is most effective, are entirely teacher-led, rely heavily on the textbook, and involve an excessive amount of individual questioning or reading aloud. On these occasions, some pupils remain passive and uninvolved for large parts of lessons. Many make little use of the foreign language, and poor pronunciation, especially in Key Stage 4 lessons, is often not picked up by the teacher. There are few opportunities for them to work collaboratively in groups, even in the sixth form. This cuts down their capacity to work independently of their teacher.

204. Planning in a minority of lessons can be over-ambitious in terms of choice of materials and inappropriate targeting of the ability range. In contrast, there are a few examples of the opposite approach where lessons provide little challenge or extension of pupils' knowledge. In one French lesson, for example, they were asked to complete a table of verb parts in different tenses, but books remained open during this exercise so that the activity became merely a copying of words. Teachers are aware of the identity of pupils who have special educational needs, and also those who are part of the Gifted and Talented cohort, but there is little specific targeting of such pupils and this is unsatisfactory. Teachers regularly and thoroughly test and assess pupils' work. The French and Spanish departments also conduct a useful analysis of the GCSE and A-level results each year. These processes are infrequently used to inform the future planning of the Programmes of Study.

205. Overall, the department has a significant strength in its teachers, which places it in a good position to move forward. There are, nevertheless, a number of areas in need of development. The department has already moved into a new suite of classrooms, one of which could eventually provide improved access to information and communication technology. This is not used at all at present in either of the two departments. French and Spanish have been organised as entirely separate departments for some time. The imminent appointment of a head of faculty will also bring important benefits in creating consistency of policies and teaching in these subjects. Both departments have not monitored and evaluated teaching performance in order to share and spread the best examples of good practice. There are no clear policies to guide pupils' use of the target language and effective approaches to differentiation and the performance of boys and girls. The department has not addressed the demands of Curriculum 2000 at Key Stage 3 although, in the thorough documentation produced by the head of French, a start has been made on this. Planning is still however, at an embryonic stage and lessons are not addressing the new Programme of Study, knowledge of language structures as opposed to topics, and progression of grammar and language learning in general and this is unsatisfactory. In Spanish, no start has been made on this area, and more specific planning is needed in Key Stage 4 and the new modular AS and A2 courses. There is a serious lack of resources in each department. One overhead projector is shared by all of the teachers, and there is a shortage of video recorders and televisions to enrich the teaching programmes. There is no adequate independent reading programme material in the school library and the department material, in general, is dated. Language College status could provide solutions to a number of deficiencies in terms of resources and accommodation. The department therefore has the capacity and the opportunity to progress further.

MUSIC

206. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' standards of attainment are beyond national expectations on the department's own nine-point grading system. The department is not however using the statutory assessments, and this is unsatisfactory. As a result of college tuition an impressive 125 pupils took a range of theory and practical music examinations during the previous college year of which three achieved Grade VIII distinction.

207. GCSE results for the past three years are consistently higher than all other comparative averages by being grades A* and A only. A-level results have equally surpassed national averages. It is noteworthy that the A-level group of six who took the examination in 2000 were all boys although the current groups are mixed.

208. At Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in lessons ranges from satisfactory to excellent. For example, singing, though not always of top quality and mainly unison, is always hearty and confident and above national expectations. As a result of setting Year 7 in small classes based on previous musical experience, pupils carry forward past learning to more demanding tasks later in Key Stage 3. For example, Year 8 pupils show a full knowledge and understanding of ground bass, riffs and ostinato. Unfortunately this progress is not fully developed in Years 8 and 9 as classes revert to mixed ability groups of 32 pupils. This results in Grade V instrumentalists and vocalists at Year 9 not being fully stretched, and group work not being adequately monitored to achieve the best musical outcomes.

209. The subject has a strong and successful emphasis on performing and many GCSE pupils starting the course are at a Grade V standard, with many competent on two or more instruments. Examination pupils apply phrasing and interpretation confidently to their performances and produce exciting compositions. Post-16 pupils apply learnt concepts very well, for example, tonality, key, chords and cadences, but some have difficulty with musical dictation. Again, A-level students are very experienced instrumentalists or vocalists and have high listening and appraising skills.

210. The high attainment of individual instrumentalists and vocalists is enormously helped by a large team of visiting teachers. Pupils willingly attend these lessons. A number of scholarships are awarded each year, otherwise parents pay for lessons, although a remission policy does exist for pupils from families with financial difficulties. At least 20 per cent of pupils receive such tuition in college, well in excess of national averages. To play or sing is a respectful and respected activity that brings an enhanced social development and academic discipline to pupils' lives. Pupils sing from notated music at all times.

211. A wide variety of extra-curricular groups exist. Attendance at these activities is high with standards well above national expectations. For example, the chamber orchestra of 14 senior pupils perform Handel and Bach, both 'straight' and 'swung' to a very high standard and the choral society produce a fine youthful sound, largely due to a strong and effective contribution from tenors and basses. Pupils show a sensitivity of interpretation.

212. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent but is very good overall. In the better lessons classroom organisation and discipline is tightly controlled and there is development of musicianship alongside the promotion of good performing techniques. Teaching is unsatisfactory when pupils are not offered ways to improve performances and experienced musicians are consequently not being stretched.

213. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is mainly good. It is very good when the understanding of musical terms and concepts are fully explored against both live and recorded performances, and there is positive advice on how to appraise. When just satisfactory, for example, explanations are not fully given about the place of a minuet movement in a classical symphony and the identification of a major or minor key. The quality of A-level teaching is very good. Challenging questions and high expectations are set and students respond well to such challenges. However, there is insufficient guidance for students who struggle with musical dictation.

214. Overall, the teaching of musical instruments and the voice to individuals is very good. Teaching encourages good technique within the context of general musicianship. Teaching is only satisfactory when pupils are allowed to coast in a manner that is not fully engaging.

215. Except for a very small minority in Year 9, pupils show an extremely positive attitude to music both as performers and listeners. An impressive respect exists between pupils, between pupils and teachers and to equipment. These attitudes result in boys being more engaged in the subject than girls. This is helped by an excellent role model being set by Cathedral choristers.

216. The National Curriculum is covered despite Programmes of Study not being identified in planning. The new levels of attainment have yet to be applied. Pupils' class work is kept in loose-leaf folders and adequately marked and assessed.

217. A very good teaching and musical example is set by a most enthusiastic and energetic head of department. The organisation of the subject within the department and across the school and the management of the wide range of support staff is good and efficiently managed with good support from the part time administrative assistant although the level of support and monitoring given to newly qualified teachers is insufficient.

218. The subject has access to a good suite of rooms, although the main teaching room is small and with fixed furniture which constrains options for differing approaches to classroom organisation. There is a very good range of text books, scores and recordings. The quality of the sound reproduction system in the recital room is unsatisfactory. Pupils have no access to a computer in lessons and this limits opportunities for independent learning.

219. In order to improve the existing very good provision the department should have regard to the following issues. The impact of the arrangements for grouping pupils on standards is not as effective in Years 8 and 9 as it is in Year 7. Curriculum planning is not referenced to the new National Curriculum Programmes of Study and the department has not undertaken an audit to identify coverage. Elements of the assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory as the new levels are not applied to pupil achievements and the statutory end of Key Stage 3 assessment procedures are not in place. Support for newly qualified teachers is insufficient. Opportunities for the use of information and communication technology in lessons are inadequate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

220. Standards of attainment in the statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are unknown, as the college did not undertake assessments against the National Curriculum attainment target. There is no GCSE course in Key Stage 4. However, a minority of pupils are able to take a GCSE course as part of their sixth form studies. GCSE results obtained in 1997 and 1998 were well above national averages for similar schools for grades A*-C. The results for 2000 are still unknown as the college is in discussion with the examining board regarding moderation of the practical marks. A-level results for grades A-B have improved during the last 3 years and all pupils have achieved A-E grades. The 1999 results for A-B grades were well above national averages for similar colleges and comparable results were achieved in 2000. This year's results compare favourably with the results achieved by the same pupils in other subjects in the college.

221. Standards of attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectations. Swimming and games are strengths. A majority of pupils swim confidently, display good technique in a variety of strokes and demonstrate very good personal survival skills. In games pupils perform consistently well with good technique in practices and are able to apply the learnt skills effectively into the game situation. This is particularly evident in rugby and hockey lessons. In gymnastics a minority of pupils lack body control, the confidence to take weight on their hands and fluency between movements. Due to the absence of appropriate resources, pupils are unable to transfer their skills and develop their sequences on to suitable apparatus which affects the standards achieved. Pupils are able to make basic evaluations about their own and others' performance. They undertake appropriate warm-ups and warm-downs for the different activities and understand the importance of exercise in leading a healthy lifestyle.

222. Attainment by the majority at the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. Games is a strength. The majority of pupils are able to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics effectively. They play competitive games with speed, precision and anticipation. In hockey and rugby pupils play with confidence, display advanced techniques and are able to adapt skilfully to changing conditions in the game. They perform their skills consistently well under pressure in practice and game situations. Basketball skills are less advanced in the game situation for a minority of pupils who lack ball control. In outdoor and adventurous activities pupils work co-operatively with each other in a safe manner in order to meet set challenges as seen in a Year 10 rock climbing lesson.

223. The attainment by the majority of students in the sixth form studying on the A-level and AS-level courses is above the national average. Students enter into lively and informed debate in lessons. They are confident in the use of technical language in their carefully researched written work and students demonstrate a good understanding of analysis of performance. As a result they are able to refine their own skills and give advice to others as to how to improve their standard. The majority of sixth form students attend a prescribed lesson on the timetable where they are able to partake in a variety of activities. The standards achieved in these sports are appropriate to the age of the students.

224. The quality of teaching is nearly always good or better with the majority being very good. Teachers

have very good subject knowledge, high expectations and very good relationships with the pupils. This enables pupils to have a solid grasp of the basic skills with good progress being made in all key stages. Lessons have a good pace, often due to teachers giving good demonstrations which improve understanding and enable pupils to quickly move into the set practice. Lessons are well planned and there is good use of questions and answers to consolidate knowledge and test the level of understanding. In the very good lessons pupils are given the opportunity to evaluate their own and others' performance and given time to refine their skills, this was evident in Year 7 rugby and hockey lessons. Teaching in gymnastics in Key Stage 3 is less well taught due to low expectations and pupils not being sufficiently challenged. Teachers are good role models and teach with enthusiasm, which is reflected in the pupils' attitudes to the subject. These attitudes contribute significantly to the very good learning that takes place in all key stages. Tasks are set that are challenging and appropriate to the ability of all pupils. In all activities teachers quickly identify pupils having difficulty and give advice and set tasks matched to their needs. The more able pupils are also given tasks suitable to their ability and are encouraged to attend the many extra-curricular clubs on offer to extend their skills. This ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress with their learning. Pupils take some responsibility when solving problems for themselves as seen in a Year 7 hockey lesson on tackling. All pupils in Key Stage 3 are assessed at the end of each unit of work and results recorded on individual record sheets. This needs to be extended to Key Stage 4 and areas for development should be shared with all pupils. The small minority of pupils who are unable to take part physically in lessons are involved in taking notes on the main teaching points and evaluating pupils' performance, which in turn develops their own observational skills.

225. The pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good in both key stages and the sixth form. They are attentive, keen to learn and work well individually, in pairs, small groups and teams. They work with enthusiasm and enjoy the subject even when working outdoors in poor weather conditions. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with the teachers.

226. The department is well managed. The boys' and girls' departments work closely together. The excellent sporting facilities contribute greatly to the quality of teaching and learning and the standard of pupils' performance. Staff, from within and outside the department, are well utilised in curricular and extra-curricular time in order to make the best use of their expertise. Staff take part in a termly monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that high standards are maintained.

227. There is a very high participation rate in the excellent extra-curricular programme that is available to pupils of all abilities. Pupils are able to further their interests by representing a college team and there is an extensive fixture list for many sports. During the last year national achievements have been gained by individuals in swimming, athletics and in a biathlon event. Pupils have represented county teams in cross-country, rugby, cricket, netball and hockey. The college netball and hockey teams are Liverpool City Champions at U13, U14, U15 and U16 age groups. The excellent links forged with local clubs and organisations also encourage pupils to participate in community activities. This extra-curricular provision including residential visits, outdoor pursuits and trips abroad, makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development and in particular their social and moral growth. The college achieved the SPORTSMARK award in 1999 in recognition of the very good curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to all pupils.

228. In order to build on the existing good provision, the department now needs to consider the following areas. Insufficient time is given to gymnastics in Key Stage 3 and resources for this activity are inadequate. The length of time given to units of work in each Key Stage 3 activity is inadequate to ensure progression and continuity. Teaching does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to make their own decisions and gain independence, thereby taking more responsibility for their learning. The Key Stage 3 schemes of work is not sufficiently linked to the new National Curriculum introduced in September 2000.

BUSINESS STUDIES

229. Students follow business studies at AS-level and most are likely to continue this course at A2 in Year 13. Standards of attainment are very good and students make very good progress in the subject. The last three years' results show all students to have passed at A-level. The average number of passes at A/B grades are above the national level for selective colleges though the proportion of grade As is less than the department predicted. There is a slight gender difference in results during 1999/2000 with girls gaining one

average point higher than boys.

230. The high expectations of the department are made clear to students. They show a readiness to work together. Students make very good progress in the lessons and continue with appropriate work beyond the lesson. All teaching shows the teachers' good subject knowledge and clear explanations of theory. Teachers set the work within a business context and build well on the students' own experiences.

231. The quality of lesson planning is good overall. The best teaching owes much to thoughtful planning with interesting activities, good use of resources and tight schedules playing an important part. The good range of teaching methods in these lessons includes a mixture of explanation and practical tasks. In one lesson students worked in pairs on questions which drew on their experience of job descriptions. They had an overhead transparency for reference and completed the task within a tight time frame. In another lesson students used a scripted role play to highlight effectively the issues surrounding conflict within the work place. Teachers support the students appropriately and sensibly collect in homework while students are busy. Relationships in all classes are positive and of a good nature.

232. The business studies department is very well led. The documentation shows evidence of careful thought and planning. Policies are clear. There is a well presented student handbook, an appropriate development plan, good references to monitoring and to improvement and clear targets for the future.

233. In order to bring about improvements to teaching the following features need attention: the learning materials and exercises prepared are not always available to all classes; the vocal range used is sometimes overbearing in the small rooms; and insufficient use is made of information and communication technology within lessons to enhance learning.

ECONOMICS

234. This subject has been successfully re-introduced in the sixth form and has attracted sufficient numbers to be viable. Students have yet to be entered for any external examinations. The students are expected to achieve a high standard of work. They make good reference to economic theory as they learn and in written tasks they quickly applied concepts, for example, related to the elasticity of demand. Students use formulae and economic theory to explain their written answers. Students read some case study examples without much difficulty and they work hard in class and answer any of the teacher's questions.

235. Students benefit from the teacher's good knowledge and from substantial experience in teaching the subject. This provides confident explanations, precise use of economic terms and some good use of relevant examples to interest students. The teacher makes good and effective use of the whiteboard with text and graphs that supported explanations and aided students' understanding. Overall the teaching enables the students to make good progress. The teaching style is restricted, mainly didactic, with little room given to the students to investigate or to simulate the learning more actively. Lesson plans are brief which obscures some learning outcomes. The learning materials provided are inadequate as some examples of problems and extracts for reading are poorly duplicated. Students have no text books and these are still waiting to be ordered three months into the course. There is not enough attention given to all of the students in the class, to their progress and their grasp of this new subject.

236. The launch of economics has been managed successfully. Induction information was given to parents, to staff and to students in Year 11. A course outline and basic policy statements are in place. There is little evidence to support any vision for the development of the department. The department lacks resources, there is insufficient detail to the scheme of work, there is no development plan or proposals. The management of this developing subject is unsatisfactory.

SIXTH FORM PROVISION

237. The majority of students stay on to study in the sixth form. A small percentage leave to study elsewhere but the college also recruits some new students. New students say that they were able to settle quickly and were happy with the change they had made. Overall parents are supportive and satisfied with the provision.

238. The students value the good level of guidance given to them in Year 11 about the sixth form. Students are given clear documentation explaining the new Post-16 Curriculum 2000 and a brief outline of each course. Students received an induction to their sixth form programme that many found helpful. There are high expectations of students in the sixth form. Students speak positively about the advice and support they have been given in the sixth form and proudly about the willingness of staff always to be there for them and to see them on to higher education.

239. The college offers 20 subjects to A-level, a wide range that meets the choice of the majority of students in the sixth form. The college has successfully planned for the introduction of Curriculum 2000, Post-16. Students have been given clear advice about the AS and A2 programmes. In addition, the college has introduced four General Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) advanced subjects, to single award. Two of these courses, information and communication technology and performing arts, have attracted viable numbers and are running successfully.

240. A strict entry requirement of six grade Bs prevents a small number of students gaining access. There is no intermediate level programme in place and the college will need to widen its provision if it is to meet the needs of a more comprehensive intake. Standards and attainment are high in almost all subjects studied with the exception of Spanish where attainment is below national averages.

241. All students follow a general programme in religious education, physical education and a new Key Skills course in Year 12. The Key Skills programme has been well organised and introduced successfully as a discrete component. Students have special files and documentation. Auditing arrangements are less clear and the programme needs to be kept under review to ensure that it meets the skill level of the different students.

242. A-level results are consistently above national averages in the higher grades in all subjects apart from history and French which were average and Spanish which was well below the national average in 1999 but just below in 2000. Standards seen in lessons are high overall. Overall the quality of teaching is very good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Eight out of every ten lessons observed were good or better and just over half were very good or better. Overall teaching is very good in art, business studies, information and communication technology, history, music and physical education, it is satisfactory in modern foreign languages and good in other subjects.

243. Overall the curriculum provision in the sixth form is good. The quality and range of the curriculum is excellent in physical education, very good in English, design and technology, history, art, music and business studies, good in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in information communication technology and geography. Politics has recently been re-introduced very successfully but only at AS-level. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in economics as the department lacks resources and there is little detail to the scheme of work.

244. The college has offered for the first time four options in GNVQ and has successfully introduced two programmes to single award. These are in performing arts and in information and communication technology. Whilst the delivery of the programme is at an early stage, students feel confident and well supported. Course files and documentation is in place, and students are given appropriate guidance. Students in performing arts understood their printed assignment schedules and follow them closely when developing their work in class. They use the assessment criteria effectively and performed competently. They reviewed and discussed together and they improved their practical work. The students are enthusiastic, hard working, keen and responsive. They choose to attend theatres regularly in their own time. Teaching staff show a good grasp of the approach required for GNVQ. Planning of the performing arts course is a thorough blend of practical and theoretical work. Teachers keep up-to-date through meetings with teachers at other colleges. The college needs to ensure that the staff teaching GNVQ are able to gain additional vocational awards to support this development. The overall quality of teaching is good.

245. Students are given a range of enrichment opportunities within their subjects. Students in performing arts spoke of their frequent visits to the theatre and business studies students were due to attend a business studies conference. The college enables staff to run workshops outside of lessons and 15 subjects offer additional lunchtime sessions. There are good examples of students receiving individual tutorials on their

progress and help with their applications for higher education.

246. The sixth form provision is effectively managed by the head of upper school and by the heads of Years 12 and 13. They are aware of the need to keep college provision under review. The college is improving its use of data for analysis of A-level performance. It employs a commercially available system that uses nationally moderated data to enable the college to make judgements on the quality of provision and added value gained by the students. Students are able to change a course if they so need and tutors understand their role in guidance. Staff with responsibility for the sixth form, have rooms close to the student common rooms and they are accessible to the students. There is good day-to-day interaction and this affords good relationships and monitoring of student progress and behaviour.

247. Students are encouraged to make decisions and to be responsible members of the college. There is an active and effective sixth form committee with representatives from every sixth form class. Members of the sixth form take part in the college's extra-curricular activities such as in music, college council and debating society. Sixth form students are conspicuous around the college. Some are elected to become prefects and carry out a variety of duties and this is valued by the students and their parents. Members of the sixth form volunteer and help younger pupils who need extra help and support in class. This 'pals' system is appreciated by the Year 7 pupils. Many sixth form students are involved in charity appeals for example in work for Amnesty International.

248. The refurbished accommodation for the sixth form provides bright and well ordered teaching rooms, common rooms and study rooms. Pastoral and subject staff are accessible to the students. Students appreciate the co-operative relationships developed with their teachers. Staff make clear academic and personal demands on the students and behaviour is of a high standard.

249. The senior management are aware of the costs of the sixth form. An analysis shows a good match between the proportion of staff used for the sixth form which is slightly less than the proportion of funding received. The overall pupil:teacher ratio for the sixth form is 10:8. The college accepts low numbers in music, art and information and communication technology which are considered important subjects even if in a minority within the curriculum. The college has invested additional resources into the sixth form, mainly in substantial improvements made to accommodation and also in information and communication technology hardware. This funding has come from the college's additional revenue. The sixth form is not subsidised by funding allocated to other key stages. The college evaluates the cost effectiveness of the sixth-form provision through the examination results and progression rates. Results show that students who take more than two A-levels gain considerably above that of the national average with 24.4 average point score against a national average of 17.9. Twelve subjects in the college gained 100 per cent pass rate at A-level in 1999 and ten subjects in 2000. The sixth form provision gives very good value for money.