

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WITCHFORD VILLAGE COLLEGE**

Witchford, Ely

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110871

Principal: Mr J Shield

Reporting inspector: Ms L Ellis  
3773

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003

Inspection number: 249156

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the  
School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 16 years

Gender of students: Mixed

College address: Manor Road  
Witchford  
Ely

Postcode: CB6 2JA

Telephone number: 01353 662053

Fax number: 01353 662567

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr K Hennessy

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
03773	Ms L Ellis	Registered inspector		What sort of college is it? How high are standards? The college's results and students' achievements How well is the college led and managed? What should the college do to improve further?
09545	Mr K Greateorex	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the college care for its students? How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
32086	Ms J Bond	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30648	Mr B Skelton	Team inspector	English	
32335	Mr A Sortwell	Team inspector	Science	
08119	Mr D Milham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
17132	Ms J Copas	Team inspector	Art and design	
03691	Mr P Mason	Team inspector	Design and technology Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
32550	Mr J Parker	Team inspector	Geography	
22038	Ms H Spurrier	Team inspector	History Community Education	
07431	Mr M Lewis	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
18834	Ms S Green	Team inspector	Music	
19858	Mr J Follett	Team inspector	Physical education	
11684	Ms F Le Pla	Team inspector	Religious education	How well are students taught?
11832	Mr G Matthews	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Educational inclusion including race equality	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Witchford Village College is an average-sized school, with much adult and youth community activity. It serves a rural area, and most of the 862 students travel by bus to the college from surrounding villages. The college is popular and numbers of students are increasing. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. The area is relatively advantaged compared with schools nationally. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. Students arrive with an average spread of attainment, and the proportions with special educational needs (SEN) or statements of SEN are similar to the national averages. There are very few students for whom English is not their first language, but there is a relatively high proportion of students from the Traveller community (3%). The college has, in the last two years, gained awards for achievement in sport and art and design and has attained Sports College status effective from September 2003.

### **HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS**

This is a college that serves its community well and provides a sound education. Students leave the college with very positive attitudes towards learning and are well prepared for their next phase of education or for work. The college has undergone a period of significant change and now has the capacity to make rapid improvement. There is strong leadership and a shared will to make improvements in standards. Responsibilities for social inclusion are taken very seriously and staff work hard to ensure that all students can participate. Overall, the standard of teaching is good. Over the last few years there have been improvements in students' attainment at age 14 and at age 16, but a significant minority of students make less than satisfactory progress. At present the college provides sound value for money.

#### **What the college does well**

- Strong leadership from the principal, vice-principals and governors, which is effecting positive change in the college.
- In almost one third of lessons teaching is very good or excellent.
- Students with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Attainment in GCSE art and design, drama, physical education and science.
- Systems for guiding students encourage all to participate in what the college offers.
- The provision for social and moral development promotes very good behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning.
- Provides for young people, Travellers and adults through the community programme both inside and outside of normal college hours.

#### **What could be improved**

- The achievement of some students aged 14 and 16.
- More opportunities for vocational courses for students aged 14-16 and the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education (RE) and spiritual development.
- The resources for ICT and the opportunities for students to use ICT to enhance learning in subjects.
- Written feedback to students through marking, and to their parents through reports indicating the progress students are making and how they can improve.

*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 maintained and built upon the strengths reported in the previous inspection report of February 1997, and satisfactory progress has been made in most of the key issues for improvement. The overall standards attained at age 14 have improved slightly faster than the national rate. At age 16, in 2002, they matched the national average. However, whilst most girls make satisfactory progress it is still the case that a significant minority do not. The quality of teaching has improved and the reported weakness in Year 9 no longer exists. Good quality schemes of work are in place for most subjects. There has been an improvement in the provision for ICT in Key Stage 4 but this remains an area for development across the subjects. The provision of religious education for students aged 14 -16 was changed but due to recruitment problems remains unsatisfactory. Effective feedback to students through marking is still a weakness, but much has been done to improve the monitoring and guidance of students' progress. With the appointment of the current principal came a sharp focus on developing teaching skills and raising achievement. The college has significantly improved line-management arrangements and its procedures of self-evaluation so that there is now a capacity for rapid improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	D	B	C	C

**Key**

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

### Standards in tests and examinations

In 2002, the overall standard in the national tests taken by Year 9 students was in line with the national average. Standards in science were above average; in mathematics the standard was average, but in English it was below the average. Girls have, in previous years, attained much more highly than boys, but in 2002 the gap was narrowed with boys exceeding girls attainment in science and mathematics. However, girls still attain standards that are higher than boys in English but to a lesser extent than is found nationally. Since the last inspection standards have risen above the national trend.

General Certificate of Education (GCSE) results of Year 11 students in 2002 were above the national average for those obtaining five or more GCSEs. The proportion achieving these at A\*-C grades was in line with the national average. In 2002, girls on average achieved a better set of GCSE results than boys to a greater extent than normally found. Since the last inspection standards have risen. Standards were high in science, art and design, drama and physical education (PE). Standards in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, German and music were similar to the national averages. English and French results were below average.

Compared with similar schools, based on the number of students eligible for free school meals, overall results in Witchford are about average at age 14 and 16. At age 14, science and mathematics results are above average, and at age 16, science results are in the top 5 per cent for similar schools. However, when the results are compared with schools with similar prior attainment they show that students are below average in mathematics and science at age 14. In English, standards are well below average at age 14 and 16.

### Standards of work seen

For students currently in the school inspectors found that standards were above those normally seen at age 16 in English, and at age 14 and 16 in science. Standards were average at both ages for mathematics and at age 14 in English. In comparison with the standards normally seen, by Year 11



standards are well above average in art and design, and above average in geography and PE. Standards are unsatisfactory in RE and citizenship.

In 2002, the college was close to, but just below, the target set for students gaining 5 +GCSE at grades A\*-C. It has challenging but appropriate targets for 2003.

Students with special educational needs make good progress during their time in college, and those from the Traveller community make good progress and attain more highly than is usually found.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	<b>Very good.</b> Students show enthusiasm and have very good involvement in lessons. They enjoy coming to college and show that they are keen to learn in most lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Very good.</b> The college is an orderly place with very few incidents of bullying or other oppressive behaviour. However, in the few cases where teaching is weak, the behaviour of a very small minority disturbs the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Very good.</b> Relationships amongst students are supportive and helpful. Students have respect for the feelings of others and show good levels of initiative.
Attendance	<b>Good.</b> Students are punctual to lessons, and the attendance rate is above the national average, which is an improvement on previous years.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

Teaching across the college is good. It leads to effective learning for the great majority of students. Teaching was good or better in six out of ten lessons seen with half of these being very good or excellent, which is a higher proportion than is usually seen. In a few lessons (about one in fourteen) there were weaknesses sufficient to make them unsatisfactory. Temporary or inexperienced teachers, whose behaviour management skills were weak, often taught these lessons. There is good teaching of literacy skills across subjects, and teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory.

The largest proportion of consistently good teaching was in art and design, drama, history, music, physical education, ICT and geography. It was also good in science, in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and in English and German in Years 10 and 11. Excellent teaching was seen in individual lessons in drama, geography, history, ICT, mathematics and PE. In these lessons, the quality of students' learning was impressive. The largest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in French, where classes were taken by inexperienced or temporary teachers. The marking of students' work is effective in some subjects but is, overall, an area for development.

Learning is good overall. Students generally sustain good levels of concentration and work productively. They learn best when the lesson has a variety of tasks and involves practical activity.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Satisfactory overall.</b> The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets the statutory requirements but, at Key Stage 4, there is too little attention given to RE. Too little time is allotted to PSHE. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is not very broad; for example there are no vocational courses and students do not take a full GCSE in ICT. The provision for extra-curricular activity and careers education is good. The community provision makes a very good contribution to students' learning.
Provision for students with special educational needs	<b>Good overall and very good in Key Stage 3.</b> Students are monitored well and receive good support from the teaching assistants. They make good progress throughout the college.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Satisfactory overall.</b> Whilst provision for social development is very good and that for moral development is good, there are weaknesses in the provision for spiritual development. Also, the time allotted to PSHE is too short for this very important programme. Students have good experiences of European culture but insufficient awareness of beliefs and values of other cultures that make up modern-day Britain.
How well the college cares for its students	<b>There are good procedures for guidance and support for all students.</b> Students are well known to teachers and their progress is regularly monitored. All staff respond well to individual needs. The Student Support Service is effective at guiding students who have concerns.

The college has good systems for communicating with parents but the quality of end-of-year reports is inconsistent. In some instances parents are not well informed about their child's progress or what the student needs to do to improve. Parents receive half-termly reports about their child's effort in each subject but not their progress in terms of standards attained.

## HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	<b>Good overall.</b> The principal is successful in creating a clear educational direction for the college. He is effectively supported by the vice-principals. The aims and values of the college are reflected throughout its work. There are weaknesses in the management of some key subject areas, for example mathematics, ICT and PSHE.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	<b>Good.</b> The governors are very clear about their role in shaping the direction of the college. The business of the governing body runs efficiently. The governors offer appropriate challenge and monitor closely the work of the college. They fulfil almost all their statutory obligations except for the provision for RE, a daily act of collective worship and the procedures for disapplying students from the National Curriculum.
The college's evaluation of its performance	<b>Good.</b> The college has clear and effective systems for monitoring and evaluating performance. Whilst the new system has helped in the development of teaching, the effect on standards is not yet evident.
The strategic use of resources	<b>Good.</b> The college's educational priorities are well supported through careful financial management and planning. Spending decisions clearly relate to improving the education of all students. The principles of best value are applied although more attention should be paid to comparisons with other schools.

There has been a considerable turnover of staff in the last two years. The college has had to fill some posts with unqualified or temporary staff. Recruitment problems have affected standards seen in English, mathematics, modern languages, geography, and religious education. Recruitment for the next academic year has been more successful. The accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively in all subjects; however, one music room is too small. Resources are adequate in most areas except for science and RE, and a lack of texts in mathematics,. The college has inadequate ICT resources and insufficient technician time. This is adversely affecting the curriculum and the range of learning experiences available to the students.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leadership of the principal.</li> <li>• The College's level of expectation.</li> <li>• The personal development of students.</li> <li>• The care given to students.</li> <li>• Students' enjoy going to the college.</li> <li>• Students make good progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better communication about how well students are doing.</li> <li>• The standards in English.</li> <li>• Fewer changes of teachers, especially in mathematics.</li> <li>• More consistency in the setting of homework.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team confirms almost all the positive aspects as identified by parents but there is a significant minority of students who do not make good progress. The team confirms that the college could improve communications about students' progress. The standards in English GCSE have not been as high as they should be. However, the college has the capacity to make improvements. Staffing problems have beset mathematics during the last year. Homework is set according to the identified timetable but, too often, it is limited to finishing off classwork. The college provides many opportunities for sports and drama activity after school but there are fewer other activities than often found.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The college's results and students' achievements**

##### **Standards on entry**

1. Standards of entry into Year 7 have been in line with the national average over the last few years although students in the current Year 10 arrived with slightly above-average results. In the current Year 7, the proportion attaining the expected level is higher than average in mathematics and science but about average for English. The proportion of students who have special educational needs (SEN) for learning difficulties is about average. Students take a nationally recognised test during their first term in Year 7. The results generally show that students have slightly better capability in numerical skills than in language skills.

##### **Performance in tests and examinations**

2. In 2002, the overall standard in the national tests taken by Year 9 students was in line with the national average and the average for schools with a similar intake. Standards in science were above average; in mathematics the standard was average, but in English it was below the average. In science and maths the proportion attaining higher levels was above average. Whilst the overall standard was below that attained in 2001, over a five-year period there has been an upward trend in results that exceeds the national trend. Girls have, in previous years, attained much more highly than boys, but in 2002 the gap was narrowed with boys exceeding girls' attainment in science and mathematics. Whilst, girls still attain standards that are higher than boys in English but to a lesser extent than is found nationally.
3. General Certificate of Education (GCSE) results of Year 11 students in 2002 were above the national average for those obtaining five or more GCSEs, and well above the average of schools with a similar intake. The proportion achieving these at A\*-C grades was in line with the national average. However, there is a greater proportion than normally found leaving the college with no GCSEs and considerably more than in similar schools. This is because the college manages to retain the attendance of a group of students who might otherwise have been excluded and who follow courses that do not lead to GCSE. In 2002, girls on average achieved a better set of GCSE results than boys to a greater extent than normally found.
4. In 2002, the GCSE results were well above average in science and in the top 5 per cent of schools with a similar intake. This was particularly good as a significantly higher-than-average proportion of students was entered for the double science exam. Results for art and design and drama were similarly very good, and for PE above average. Mathematics results were average but amongst the top 25 per cent of schools with a similar intake. Design and technology, history, geography, German and music results were about average. Results were below average for English and in the bottom 40 per cent of schools with a similar intake; there was well-below-average attainment by boys and average attainment by girls. Results for French were also below average.

## Value added by the college in the 2002 tests and examinations

5. Analysis of last year's results shows that students in Year 9 had made less progress than expected in English, maths and science. This is measured by comparing the results of Witchford students with those in other English schools where test scores at entry had been similar in 1999. This is the first year that information has been published for progress between ages 11 and 14.
6. Between age 14 and 16, students overall made much less progress than expected. This is measured by comparing the performance of students in Witchford with those schools where students had a similar attainment profile in the national tests taken in 2000. A close analysis shows that girls made satisfactory progress but that of many boys was below expectation.

## Standards of students currently at the college

7. Overall the standards observed during the inspection are similar to those normally found. The summary below sets out the standards observed in lessons during the inspection and from an examination of students' work produced over recent terms.
8. In **English**, standards are above those normally seen when taken overall but Year 11 students are producing work which is in general above that normally seen. Performance in tests and pieces of work produced for the examination indicate an improved performance in GCSE 2003. Higher-attaining students produce good, extended writing and use their imagination well. Most students have good speaking, listening and reading skills.
9. In **mathematics**, standards are above those normally seen in Year 9. Students across the ability range describe their calculation strategies but they do not have as wide a range of strategies as is normally seen. Some lower-attaining students struggle to recall multiplication facts but demonstrate a good understanding of place value. The most able students produce work of a high standard and will be taking their GCSE mathematics examination at the end of Year 10. These students need to improve their ability to apply mathematical knowledge in everyday contexts. The standard of students' work in Year 11 is generally average.
10. In **science**, standards are above those normally seen in Years 9 and 11. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' attainment. In Year 9, students of all abilities produce work of good quality. Practical skills are well developed and most students work with care. In Year 11, similar high standards are seen across the sciences, and students are above average in their ability to answer questions, in their practical skills and their written work. Students make good progress in this subject
11. Standards are well above those normally seen in **art and design** in Year 9, and exceptional in 11. In Year 9, students have strengths in tonal work, colour and observation. They acquire the ability to work independently and to reflect at a personal level; many do this to an unusually high degree. In Year 11, they achieve a wide knowledge of different media and many of them take up three-dimensional work enthusiastically. Sketchbooks are used exceptionally well and, in the best examples, the standards reached are more often found on A-level courses. Work in **drama** is well above that normally seen in Year 11.
12. Standards are above those normally seen in Years 9 and 11 in **PE**. Students of all

abilities make good progress and acquire a good knowledge, understanding and level of skill in the main sports undertaken. A particular strength is the development of the knowledge and understanding of fitness and health strand of the National Curriculum. Standards are good in Year 9 but above those normally seen in Year 11 in both **history** and **music**. In **geography** standards are higher in Year 11, where they are good, than in Year 9. Standards above those normally seen were observed in **design and technology**, **ICT**, and **modern foreign languages**.

13. Work of an average standard was observed in Year 9 **RE** but the work is poor in Year 11 as students have had little opportunity to study the range of issues within the agreed syllabus. Standards in **citizenship** are below those normally found.

### **Standards in literacy**

14. Standards of speaking and listening are generally good. Students listen attentively and readily respond to questions. When given the opportunity they develop answers to offer more evidence or to support a point of view. Students work well in pairs and in small groups, collaborating and building on one another's contributions. Students argue persuasively and recognise bias in the speech of others. They understand the need for standard English in formal work and learn technical terms relevant to their studies.
15. Most students read fluently and with good expression. Those with identified needs receive good support and make good progress. A paired reading scheme has existed for three years, in which students from Year 10 help students from Year 7 with their reading. Work examined in the scrutiny provided evidence that students read for independent research, both from printed texts and from electronic sources.
16. Most students in Years 10 and 11 write with accuracy in a range of subjects. Low-attaining students continue to make good progress relative to their prior attainment levels. Some creative writing of a high standard was seen in the work of students from all years.

### **Standards in numeracy**

17. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. The majority of students in Year 7 have a strategy for multiplying two numbers but it is not always the most effective or efficient. Students in Year 9 recognise number patterns and describe the rule for continuing the pattern but some students in Year 9 struggle to recall multiplication facts and do not have strategies to derive the answer. Some students in Year 11 lack understanding when working with percentages. In science, Year 10 students calculate speed and draw distance/speed graphs without difficulty. In physical education, students are confident in using distance and time to calculate their personal best achievements.

### **Progress for students with special educational needs SEN**

18. Students with special educational needs (SEN), including those who have a statement of SEN, are making good progress across the curriculum at both key stages.

Students are making good progress with their reading, writing, spelling and number work and take care to produce work that is legible and neat. They are developing confidence with their reading and know how to learn their spellings and have strategies to use when they come across an unfamiliar word.

### **Performance targets**

19. The standards attained in 2002 were just below the target set by governors. The targets for 2003 are higher and appropriately challenging. The standard of work seen and the college's own monitoring, indicate that the targets are likely to be reached.

### **Parents' comments**

20. The great majority of parents who expressed an opinion through the questionnaire or at the meeting with the registered inspector, indicated that they believe that their children are making good progress at the college. A few were concerned about standards in English and some about standards in mathematics. Inspectors found that for some students their achievements in mathematics have been adversely affected by difficulties in recruiting staff. The vast majority of students in the college currently are making good progress, but last year's exam results did indicate slow progress for a significant minority of students.

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

21. The students' very high standards of behaviour and very good relationships have improved since the last inspection and, together with their very positive attitudes, are now strengths of the college and have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Attitudes**

22. Virtually all students have very positive attitudes to the college and their work. They show great enthusiasm for what they are asked to do and apply themselves very well to their activities. This was demonstrated by the students in their drama lessons when they were fully engaged and applied independent thinking to their work. Students sustain good levels of concentration because teachers plan tasks that challenge and motivate them. They take great pride and enjoyment in producing good work and are keen to share their results with others. They are articulate and keen to express their opinions as shown in an English lesson where they were confident enough to discuss and debate issues with the principal.

### **Behaviour**

23. Behaviour is very good. Some parents expressed misgivings about the standards of behaviour in the college, but these concerns are not supported by inspection evidence. When they come into college, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and at break-times, virtually all students display very high standards of behaviour. This was particularly demonstrated when the students assembled in the playground in the morning. Their behaviour was impeccable as they waited to enter the buildings. A further illustration was noted when students carried on with their presentations in a history session while the teacher was equipping himself for a role. Students move around the college in a very orderly manner and have a clear understanding of the standards expected of them. In lessons, behaviour is often very good and almost all students conform to the high expectations even when not closely supervised. However, in a very few lessons, small

numbers of boys, with poor attitudes to the work, display disruptive behaviour which inhibits the learning of the whole class.

24. Temporary exclusions are frequent for a college of this size but reflect the insistence that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. There have been no permanent exclusions over the last two years but a few students have, with support from the LEA, moved to other schools. The college is determined that smoking on the premises is totally unacceptable and a number of exclusions have been applied for that reason. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying or lack of respect for college property.

### **Relationships**

25. Relationships in the college are very good. Students form very constructive relationships with each other and with adults. They work co-operatively together, demonstrating that they will listen with interest to each other and will try to understand the other person's point of view. This was demonstrated regularly by students, particularly in English and drama lessons. Students show genuine pleasure in the achievements of others demonstrated during sporting events. Virtually all students act in a mature and responsible way. They consistently demonstrate patience, tolerance and understanding for others.

### **Personal development**

26. Students' personal development is good. The college provides a range of opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility and they demonstrate that the trust is well placed. Students make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as they perform jobs within the classroom and around the college. As they progress through the college greater degrees of independence are encouraged. Year 10 students have paired reading activities with students in Year 7. The implementation of year councils and the college council have greatly increased the students' maturity and understanding of democracy. Year 11 students have to make application for appointment as prefects, as do the four members of the student executive team. After their applications have been scrutinised they are interviewed to confirm their suitability for the positions. The appointments have materially improved the confidence and maturity of the team. Students are active in fundraising activities.

### **Attendance**

27. Levels of attendance at the college are above the national average and are good. Through effective monitoring and raising students' awareness of the need to attend regularly, the college has achieved an improvement in attendance this school year. Unauthorised absence is slightly below the national average. Punctuality in the morning and between lessons is very good and many students arrive early. They come cheerfully to college, eager and ready to learn, enabling the college to make a prompt and efficient start to the school day.



## Progress since the last report

28. Standards in attitudes, behaviour and personal development improved on the positive picture in the previous report. There has been an improvement in the level of attendance.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. Teaching across the college is good. It leads to effective learning for the great majority of students.
30. Across Years 7 to 11, three in ten lessons were very good or excellent. Teaching was at least good in six out of ten lessons seen. The great majority of the remaining teaching was satisfactory. However, in seven per cent of lessons, there were weaknesses sufficient to make them unsatisfactory. Most of the unsatisfactory lessons were in Years 7 and 8. Of the unsatisfactory lessons seen, only one was poor. Temporary or inexperienced teachers, whose behaviour management skills were weak, often taught these lessons.
31. There is proportionally more very good or excellent teaching across the college than is usually seen. The proportion of good or better teaching is in line with that recorded in the latest report on national standards and quality in schools.
32. The largest proportion of good teaching seen in Years 7 to 11 was in art and design, drama, history, music, physical education, ICT, science and geography. It was also good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and in English and German in Years 10 and 11. Excellent teaching was seen in individual lessons in drama, geography, history, ICT, mathematics and physical education. In these lessons, the quality of students' learning was impressive.
33. The largest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in French where classes were taken by inexperienced or temporary teachers. Unsatisfactory teaching was occasionally seen in design and technology, English, mathematics and science.

## Good teaching

34. Where the teaching observed was at least good, it exhibited a combination of many of the strengths listed below:
35. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject and convey enthusiasm.  
*The great majority of teachers demonstrate a good command of their subject and have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. Because of this, teaching is confident and well informed. An example was seen in a Year 10 art and design lesson where the teacher shared his experience and knowledge with students and helped them to understand and compare the work of different artists. In a Year 7 geography lesson, the teacher's knowledgeable explanation enabled students to understand how rivers progress from meanders to oxbow lakes. In physical education, the teacher helped Year 8 students to improve their high jump technique by demonstrating different footwork and jumping styles.*
36. Lessons are planned well, ensuring that well-defined learning objectives are supported by an appropriate range of activities.  
*Good planning is detailed: it identifies the knowledge and skills to be taught and links*

well to the previous learning. For example, a Year 9 graphics class built on previous learning about shading through planned references made by the teacher to work covered in Year 8 as they began to do their own tonal shading. In a Year 10 English class the teacher reminded the students of the work they had covered in a previous lesson to help them consolidate their understanding of the key ideas they were studying in the unit on early 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry. The good planning in a Year 7 art and design lesson enabled the students to use what they had learnt in previous work on the face and portraiture to begin their work on creating a self-portrait.

37. Set high expectations that challenge students to extend their learning into new aspects of knowledge and understanding.

*In a Year 7 music lesson, the teacher helped the class to make rapid progress in their understanding of musical clichés by setting a challenging listening task. Skilful questioning by the teacher in a Year 9 science lesson helped students to think carefully about the way they were going to record, analyse and present the results of their enquiry work. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students were set challenging questions that enabled them to develop rapidly their understanding of scale. By the end of the lesson the class was able to convert from an area scale to length and area to volume.*

38. Teachers organise lessons well, using a variety of methods that meet the learning needs of the students.

*In a Year 7 history lesson, the teacher maintained the concentration and interest of the class through effective use of different learning activities including a card-sorting starter activity, questioning and discussion, and a guided written task. In a Year 11 ICT lesson, the teacher used video conferencing very effectively to help students take part in a debate about the ethical and moral issues raised by the use of ICT. In another Year 11 lesson, the mathematics teacher used a challenging quiz activity to enable students to complete their revision for the GCSE examination in an interesting way.*

39. Students are managed well, and very good working relationships are fostered.

*In a Year 8 science lesson, the practical work was well organised so that students could work effectively in groups. During the lesson, the teacher worked with each group, helping with the task where necessary. In a Year 9 drama lesson, the teacher managed pair work on anger very well so that it did not become boisterous. During the lesson everyone had a chance to perform and evaluate their work. In their final revision lesson, a Year 11 class and their teacher dressed up and took on the role of famous figures in the History of Medicine. This created a light-hearted but very positive working atmosphere in which students worked well with their teacher to consolidate their knowledge of the topic in preparation for the GCSE examination.*

40. In addition to the particular strengths identified above, the overall standard of teaching was good because there was a great deal of consistency across the college. This teaching enables students to make good progress in their learning.

### **Satisfactory teaching**

41. In one third of lessons the teaching was satisfactory. These lessons had neither notable weaknesses nor causes for concern. In many of these lessons, students were attentive and followed activities well. Many of these lessons enabled students to make steady progress. Teachers ensured that students knew what they were going to learn and relevant resources were used to achieve the objectives. Typically, there were not enough opportunities for students to investigate situations or work independently. These

lessons lacked the intense engagement of students' interest, common in good lessons, that provides strong motivation for learning and rapid progress. In some subjects where the students had double lessons, the teaching was often satisfactory rather than good because teachers did not plan a suitable number and variety of activities to make the best use of time and enable students to maintain their concentration and engagement throughout the whole lesson.

### **Unsatisfactory teaching**

42. In the few lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory, there were important weaknesses. In these lessons, the pace of learning was usually too slow. Unsatisfactory teaching often exhibited the following features:
43. Insufficient challenge and low expectations.  
*Learning in these lessons was below students' capabilities because they spent too much time on simple tasks and they were not challenged to extend and apply what they had learned previously.*
44. The inability to manage the class and control the students who then disrupt the learning of others.  
*Failure to apply class management strategies and sanctions in these few lessons wasted time and resulted in a very slow pace of learning. Students who wished to learn were denied the opportunity to concentrate because of the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of other students.*
45. A limited range of teaching strategies was used, resulting in students losing interest and concentration.  
*Less secure teachers led students through a series of worksheets and written exercises. Because some students completed the work more rapidly than others, concentration and interest were lost while they waited for others to catch up.*

### **Teaching of gifted and talented students**

46. Talented students are taught well and their achievement in art and design, drama, PE and music is very good. These students are stimulated and encouraged to produce the highest quality performance by teachers who have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and enormous enthusiasm and energy. The highest attaining students in mathematics are well taught there is also good teaching of able students in history and geography.

### **Teaching of literacy**

47. The college is making good progress in systematically teaching literacy skills in all subjects. Exercises developed from the National Literacy Strategy are used in some English lessons. In most classrooms word-walls display key terms and concepts to develop students' vocabulary in those subjects but remain a passive display and are referred to infrequently. Effective teaching introduces new words and concepts, for example technical terms related to science or ICT. English teachers systematically introduce new words, word families, names of parts of speech and critical terms. Very effective teaching of terminology specific to physical education theory was observed in a Year 11 lesson. Terms related to genre, theatre history and drama theory are very well taught, when relevant, in drama as students work on their exercises. Reading skills are not taught as widely as vocabulary, but some examples of good practice were observed in English and in history where students are taught to beware of bias in accounts of

events. Geography lessons in Year 7 included reading skills in a card-sorting exercise to work out the stages in the formation of ox-bow lakes, and the teacher had carefully introduced new key words. Form tutors supervise the paired reading scheme in registration periods. The college participates annually in Readathon events. Work in English includes an introduction to library and research skills. Many subject departments book the Electronic Learning Environment (ELLE) facility and the use of the Internet is developing in the college. Drafting skills and writing for specific audiences are well taught in history and in English. In a Year 7 ICT lesson on creating publications there was appropriate stress on the importance of tailoring one's writing for a particular audience.

### **Teaching of numeracy**

48. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. A newly appointed co-ordinator for numeracy has had little time to influence the development of numeracy, although the teachers have had a training day to consider numeracy issues. There is no monitoring of the provision across the school. The small numbers of students who regularly attend Springboard sessions to improve their numeracy skills are making good progress. They are well supported by the learning assistants who run the sessions with a mathematics teacher. These sessions are in addition to normal mathematics lessons and take place before and after college. In a Year 9 geography lesson, students were given a clear explanation of how to draw compound line graphs. In history there are strong references to negative numbers when discussing time lines. In science the development of students' numeracy and literacy skills is satisfactory, for example, in the teaching of graphical skills and scientific formulae.

### **Teaching of students with special educational needs**

49. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Most teachers know the needs of individual students, the targets set in students' individual education plans and have high expectations of what SEN students can achieve. Teachers use a range of resources in most lessons to meet these individual learning needs and to provide access to learning. Where students are withdrawn from lessons, for example, to catch up and improve their literacy skills, they are being very well taught and supported. Teaching assistants are very knowledgeable about the specific needs of the students, and when, in lessons, they move around the classroom, supporting all SEN students with the work, then independent learning is being well developed. However, in a significant number of lessons, the teaching assistants provide support to only a few students. Teachers do not always provide, in advance, information about what the students will be learning which restricts the teaching assistants' ability to plan in advance.

### **Assessment**

50. The use of marking to improve the rate of students' progress is satisfactory overall but is not effective in all subjects. In some subject areas, such as religious education, mathematics, English, modern foreign languages and ICT in Years 10 and 11, students do not receive sufficient written feedback informing them of what they know, understand and can do and what they have to do to improve. For example, in mathematics, there are large sections of unmarked work in students' exercise books and work that is marked is usually just ticked. In English, although students' work is marked, this is not leading to corrections and improvement. However, in music, art and design and physical education, teachers use feedback very effectively to keep students informed of their progress and how they can improve. In art and design, student review and

discussion opportunities give individual students clear direction on what they need to do next to improve their work. In science, all students in Years 10 and 11 know their target grades and are aware of how they are progressing towards achieving them. The good practice found in the college needs to be shared across all departments.

## **Learning**

51. The quality of learning is good overall. In three out of ten lessons, it is very good. In one in twenty lessons, the learning is excellent. Students' learning is promoted well by the good or better teaching. When the teaching is good, students sustain good levels of concentration and waste little time in tackling the tasks and activities set. Across most subjects, students increase their understanding effectively because the learning of new knowledge and skills has been well planned. This enables them to increase their intellectual, creative and physical application appropriately as they move through the college.
52. As indicated, most students learn well when they are involved in varied and practical activities that are matched closely to their learning needs. This was seen most often in art and design, music, ICT, history and physical education. In these subjects, opportunities for group work, peer appraisal, and class discussion enabled students to learn very effectively.

## **Progress since the previous inspection**

53. Progress has been good. The proportion of good teaching reported in 1997 has improved slightly. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced by almost half and is confined to a small number of lessons. The weakness reported in teaching in Year 9 no longer exists.

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

54. All National Curriculum subjects are taught. The college will be appropriately introducing a broader curriculum in September 2003 to increase its breadth and relevance at ages 14 to 16. The way in which students are organised into teaching groups is mostly appropriate, but in mathematics, standards in Years 7 and 9 are adversely affected by the arrangements in this subject. In English, the department is experimenting with some single-gender groups in Years 10 and 11 in order to raise the attainment of boys. Provision for students who have special educational needs is good. Difficulties in recruitment have resulted in a small number of lessons being taught by teachers who are non-specialists.

## **Provision in Years 7 to 9**

55. In Years 7 to 9, all National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught. Students with higher linguistic attainment can take a second modern foreign language from Year 8. Drama is taught as a separate subject, and provision in the arts is good. Specific lessons to develop ICT skills are taught in Years 7 and 9, but ICT skills taught in other subjects are not sufficiently well co-ordinated. A recent positive curricular innovation in Year 7 is the introduction of an accelerated learning programme which teaches skills that enhance students' capacity as learners. However, there is a lack of balance within the curriculum because of the relatively small amount of time provided for personal, social and health education (PSHE), which includes citizenship. Some aspects of citizenship are intended to be taught in other subjects, such as design and

technology, history and religious education. Weak planning for citizenship means that teachers fail to identify subject links, and students do not recognise when learning relates to citizenship. The college has adopted the Key Stage 3 National Strategies, concentrating on literacy. Numeracy and other strategies have yet to make a fully effective impact on curricular provision.

### **Provision in Years 10 and 11**

56. In Years 10 to 11, almost all students undertake a full examination programme of GCSE courses. There is a satisfactory range of options. However, students who do not take a design and technology subject are not disapplied as is required. Some students take an appropriately reduced GCSE programme and study an appropriate alternative programme which includes a life-skills course.
57. A weakness of the curriculum is the lack of vocational courses. To redress this, the college is introducing a GCSE in leisure and tourism next year and it intends to introduce engineering GCSE in 2004. As in younger year groups, time for PSHE and citizenship is too short to provide fully for students' needs, and the programme lacks coherence. All students have provision for learning more advanced ICT skills and applications and many gain additional short-course GCSE accreditation but there is not a full GCSE course in ICT. The organisation of religious education fails to provide students with sufficient time to cover the GCSE short course and this reduces their chance of gaining an examination grade appropriate to their potential. The college's course does not fulfil the requirements of the county's syllabus.
58. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, with the exception of the two points mentioned above.

### **Curricular provision for students with special educational needs**

59. Students with special educational needs have access to the whole college curriculum and to the extra-curricular activities. There is a very good accessibility development plan in place to further improve physical access to classrooms. The voluntary Skills Club which takes place before and after college is very well attended by students who are eager to improve their reading, spelling and research skills. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) targets the support from teaching assistants very well. However, not all classes that would benefit from this support receive it and this limits student progress in these lessons. For students in Years 10 and 11 there are very few alternative accredited courses other than GCSEs.

### **Personal, social and health education (PSHE)**

60. The range of topics covered in PSHE is appropriate, but the thirty minutes teaching time available is shorter than normally seen. This teaching is supplemented by whole-day activities in some years. On these days teaching is focused around a theme such as the day on healthy life-styles in Year 7, and on drugs and sexual health in Year 10. Visiting speakers support these days. Through a mixture of tutor-based PSHE lessons and activity days, the college gives its students a satisfactory knowledge of drugs and substance abuse. Discussion provides consideration of moral issues and prepares students for making informed decisions. Likewise, sessions on personal relationships give them a sound knowledge of sex education at an appropriate level. Older students stated that they felt well informed about the situations they face now and those they anticipate they will encounter in the future. Eventually, it is intended that activity days will be run for each year group. Additional activities are introduced through assemblies,

such as a referendum on adopting the Euro currency in Year 9. A business enterprise activity has taken place in Year 9 linked to the impending sports college opening. Some of the limited time available for PSHE is used to teach citizenship, which links well with many of the PSHE topics covered. Careers education is covered in PSHE time in Year 11. Overall, programmes are insufficiently well co-ordinated, and this, together with shortage of time, results in unsatisfactory provision.

### **Extra-curricular provision**

61. The range of extra-curricular activities is generally satisfactory although it is heavily supplemented by youth work as part of the community aspect of the college, which is very good. Activities offered in physical education and sport are a strength of the college but the range of other activities is less than that usually found. There are many opportunities for students of all years to participate in major team games, minority sports, for example korfbal, and individual events. All who wish to participate can find suitable activities whatever their standard. Students represent the country, county and district. There are many opportunities to represent the college and house in team games. Drama involves large numbers in the major college productions. Theatre visits are arranged. Different subjects offer GCSE students the opportunity to complete coursework under supervision. An English skills club is run before and after school for students requiring literacy support. Mathematics provides additional sessions before the school day and at lunchtime for Year 7 students so that they can develop numeracy skills using 'Springboard' units.

### **Careers Education and guidance**

62. Provision for careers education is good, with some very good features. There is a well-supported programme of careers education in Years 9, 10 and 11 which students value although, as PSHE time is very limited, sometimes not all the activities can take place. Students' choices are well guided with a personal learning plan developed in Year 9 and reviewed in Year 10. Parents are involved and are supportive of the guidance programme. There are good simulated experiences for students in Years 10 and 11; for example, mock interviews and preparation for applying for jobs. A high proportion of students continue their studies in the sixth form, colleges of further education or progress to employment with training. There are suitable arrangements for work experience in Year 10; parents supplement the placements provided by the Connexions Service. The careers library is well stocked with books and a variety of ICT programmes. It is accessible throughout the day but not after school hours. The college has been a pilot for the new service of Personal Advisers for students who are at risk of underachievement, and the evaluations have been positive.

## **Community links with the curriculum**

63. There are very good links with the community. These are described in more detail in Part D of this report. The youth programme has had a positive impact on the wider curriculum of the college and its involvement in the community. The song and dance group stages concerts for the community and takes part in competitions. For the last three years they have been East of England champions. There are also two bands which play at college and community events. The management of the college website and the newsletter have enhanced the students' ICT and communication skills. Students have become involved in bid writing, fundraising and parish council activities, thus gaining practical experience of citizenship.
64. Across the years, the curriculum is enriched by a suitable range of visiting speakers and visits. Visitors include the police, medical personnel and charity workers. Visits include geography fieldwork undertaken in Ely and the Fens, a history visit to Ypres and visits to France and Germany to extend students' language experience. A project has been established with special relevance to Traveller children, helping to raise students' awareness of Traveller culture and lifestyle. This project links the college with schools in Bulgaria. A video-conference link has been formed with a school in France, South Africa and Gloucestershire, so that students may share experiences.

## **Curricular links with educational partners**

65. Curricular links with educational partners are satisfactory but there is less contact with other local secondary schools than usually found. Liaison is largely with the primary schools, but not all subjects have established links. The college has adopted the transition units of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to aid continuity in learning between primary schools and Year 7. In the summer term, students from local primary schools come to the college for an exciting science day. For the last two years a summer school for gifted and talented students has drawn together students from primary schools and younger students from the college. The college's sports development officer works half time in other local schools. Links have been established with Cambridge Regional College for a one-day-per-week vocational course from September to extend the current alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The college management is actively seeking how to best use the expertise of the local specialist colleges for the benefit of students and how it can make a contribution to North Cambridgeshire when Sports College status starts in September.

## **Equality of opportunity**

66. The college sets out to include all students in the opportunities it provides. It succeeds well in meeting this goal. Students have good access to the curriculum provided. The special educational needs department manages the withdrawal of students for additional tuition without unduly disrupting subject learning. The provision of late afternoon buses, two evenings weekly to surrounding communities, ensures that all who wish to participate in additional learning or extra-curricular activities can do so. Financial support is provided for students who come from families who would not be able to pay for the cost of school visits.

## **Gifted and talented**

67. The provision made for gifted and talented students is satisfactory overall but with some good features. There is a good policy in place, and the college has run successful summer schools. The college provides, for example, early entry to the GCSE statistics



examination and has an accelerated mathematics group in Year 9. However, homework could be better used to extend the learning of gifted and talented students who often complete the extension tasks set for homework during the lesson.

## **Educational Inclusion**

68. The college has a strong ethos of inclusion and has developed policies and practices to include all students. It makes provision for students with a wide range of needs and effectively supports students' access to the whole-school curriculum. The college, for example, is making good provision for students with Asperger's syndrome and also meets the needs of Traveller students very well. It has created a student services suite to which students may be referred for direct personal support. This service draws together the expertise of various agencies to support the student and, in some instances, the family. The college is being successful in avoiding the permanent exclusion of students and monitors the achievements of diverse groups of students.

## **Progress since the previous report**

69. Since the previous inspection, the college has made good progress in improving provision for ICT, and RE in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, religious education still fails to meet the requirements of the county's syllabus. The time available for learning during the school week has been increased to the amount recommended. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs remains a strength. However, the college no longer provides a range of vocational courses and has narrowed its curriculum for older students.

## **Provision made for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

70. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but there are variations as set out below.

## **Spiritual development**

71. The provision made for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Across many subjects of the curriculum, such as history, modern foreign languages, ICT, design and technology, mathematics, art and design and geography, opportunities for reflection and consideration of the deeper meanings of life are often missed. Music lessons provide good opportunities for spiritual development. In a Year 8 lesson, students were encouraged to reflect on the emotions and feelings in Bartok's opera Bluebeard's Castle and then to think about their own hopes and dreams. Younger students in religious education are given opportunities for personal reflection. In a lesson on Pilgrimage, Year 7 students thought about places that were special to them and considered the spiritual benefits to a Hindu of visiting the river Ganges. The lack of curricular time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 means that these opportunities are rarely given to older students. Some assemblies contribute to spiritual development through providing time for reflection. In a Year 7 and 8 assembly, students were encouraged to think about music, places and events that have had an impact on them. The whole college takes part in an Act of Remembrance to commemorate Remembrance Day and this occasion provides an opportunity for reflection. In form time, opportunities for reflection are not taken. There are not enough opportunities for students to take part in collective worship. The college has recently embarked on a project to establish a chaplaincy service but plans are still at an early stage of development.

## **Moral development**

72. Provision to promote students' moral development is very good. Most subjects consider moral issues, such as in geography where Year 9 students discussed the ethical issues raised by promoting tourism in some areas. In sports activities, students show good regard for playing fairly and by the rules. In ICT, students in Year 11 used video conferencing to discuss moral and ethical issues raised by the use of ICT. In science, the consequences of the overuse of unsustainable resources are discussed. In Year 8, students discussed moral issues relating to the treatment of slaves in their work on the Black Peoples of America. The PSHE programme contributes to students' moral development through units of work on topics such as drugs and the law. Students show a moral concern for the needs of others less fortunate than themselves by contributing to charity events such as Operation Christmas Child. Year 8 students raised money to support charity work in Africa. Students participating in community activities have further opportunities for moral development through involvement in activities such as Millennium Volunteers. Staff set very good role models through the relationships they establish with other adults and students. They clearly demonstrate by their work, words and actions that there are principles that distinguish right from wrong.

## **Social development**

73. Provision for students' social development is very good. History, modern foreign language and mathematics lessons effectively develop collaborative group and pair work. In music lessons, students work well together to evaluate their own and others' performing and composition work. In physical education, students are often encouraged to lead small groups in warm-up activities. The skills club provides an opportunity for students to mix and help each other. Older students in Year 10 mix with younger students in Year 7 when they help with the paired reading scheme. Older students have the opportunity to take on responsibility in the college by applying to become a prefect or a member of the student executive. Other students take on responsibility by becoming college web reporters, sports captains or completing the Junior Sports Leader award. The year and college student councils are involved in projects such as fundraising for charities and, in all years, students have the opportunity to be elected as form group representatives. Younger students undertake reception duties.

## **Cultural development**

74. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Students benefit from visits to the theatre in drama and English. Drama workshops, in conjunction with outside agencies such as the Black Cat Theatre Group, offer opportunities for participation in cultural activities. In art, students in Year 11 visit the Tate Modern gallery. In modern foreign languages, a day trip to France, a study visit to Normandy and an exchange visit to Heidelberg help to raise students' awareness of European culture. The community Traveller programme and the visit of the Roma group from Bulgaria help to raise students' awareness of Traveller culture and lifestyle. In a few subjects, opportunities to enrich teaching by using examples from a range of cultures are taken. Music from a range of cultures is effectively integrated throughout the music curriculum. In geography, work on Ghana, Gambia and Spain helps students to understand other cultures and cultural differences. Religious education contributes to students' awareness of religious diversity through the study of Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism but there are no opportunities for them to visit different places of worship. In other subjects such as art, science and ICT, opportunities to raise awareness of cultural issues are often missed. The college effectively raises students' awareness of

elements of European life and culture but not enough is done to prepare them for life outside the college in a culturally diverse society.

75. The college has identified how it seeks to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across subjects and in whole-college activities. Although some subjects have addressed these aspects in their documentation, they are not planned systematically into schemes of work or monitored.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

76. Since the previous inspection, provision for moral and social development has remained strong. Provision for spiritual development remains a weakness.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

77. The college provides good quality support and guidance and effectively promotes the welfare, health and safety of the students in a cheerful, caring and secure environment.

### **Promoting and monitoring personal development**

78. Students' personal development is promoted very well. The very good relationships within the college encourage students to learn and develop as individuals and promote their awareness of citizenship issues. Year co-ordinators and form tutors move through the college with the students, enabling them to know their students well and have a very clear idea of their personal strengths and weaknesses, and thus enabling them to offer effective counselling and support. All staff show great concern for the wellbeing of students, and a range of measures exists to promote their development. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of the students and consistently monitor well their personal development and their ability to cope on a day-to-day basis. The newly formed student support service is very effective in promoting students' personal development. Staff help individuals to deal with difficulties, both at school and at home, and support their inclusion in all the college has to offer.

### **Promoting and monitoring attendance**

79. The college continues to have effective systems to monitor and promote attendance. Registers are marked speedily, correctly and efficiently at the start of the school day and after lunch. All absences are properly noted and contact is made with parents to explain any absence. Attendance figures are properly aggregated and emerging patterns noted. Liaison with the education welfare officer is very effective in addressing potential problems at an early stage. The college's procedures for improving attendance have been effective and have resulted in an increase in attendance for the current school year.

### **Promoting and monitoring good behaviour**

80. The principal and staff provide very good role models in promoting high standards of good behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are in place. The college rules are known and understood by all students. The consequences of unacceptable behaviour have been made clear and are readily accepted. The behaviour policy is consistently applied by all members of staff who were seen during the inspection to pre-empt incidents of possible misbehaviour with firm, calm intervention, maintaining good control.

### **Promoting and monitoring health, welfare and safety**

81. Child protection issues are handled effectively. Staff continue to understand their roles and responsibilities and are aware of the need for vigilance and the steps to take if suspicions are aroused.
82. Health and safety is promoted effectively in the college. Site inspections are conducted at regular intervals to identify and remedy potential hazards. Although individual departments have completed effective risk assessments there is no centrally held record to ensure that all general eventualities have been recognised and assessed. All staff are safety conscious and watch for the security of the students. They work hard to maintain a secure environment in which the wellbeing of students is promoted effectively.

### **Promoting and monitoring students' academic progress**

83. The college has good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress, although these are very new and not yet used in every subject area. The college has a central store of data which is accessible to all staff. This contains information on students' prior attainment. Some year co-ordinators have started to use this data, along with teacher assessments, to identify small groups of underachieving students. The progress of these students is then monitored by their form tutors. The assessment co-ordinator analyses the performance data of students at the end of Key Stage 4, but this value added-analysis is not completed consistently across all departments or for students at the end of Key Stage 3. There is insufficient information in subject areas about groups of students who are performing well and those who are underachieving. In history, where this information is available, it has led to teachers using different strategies for revision this year.
84. Procedures for assessment are good or better in English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography, physical education and music. In mathematics and science, there are regular end-of-topic tests. In PE and geography, assessment is good. The procedures for assessing students' attainment are unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and poor in religious education and citizenship. There is no assessment of students' work in citizenship in Years 7 to 9, which will make it difficult for the college to meet the statutory requirement to report against the end-of-key stage descriptors this year. In religious education, there is again no evidence of assessment against the key stage descriptors that are in the Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

## **Use of assessment for students with special educational needs**

85. Very good links exist with partner schools: and the special educational needs of students are identified before they attend Witchford Village College. In addition, regular monitoring of the progress of students with special educational needs takes place. The SEN working party meets regularly and is well attended by representatives from subject departments. It monitors the progress of students with SEN and identifies any student who is beginning to cause concern to teachers. Students' individual education plans (IEPs) are regularly reviewed and their teachers and teaching assistants are involved in this activity. However, the targets set in IEPs are not always specific and measurable, and therefore it is difficult for the progress of the student to be accurately measured or for the student to be clear about the target that he or she is working towards. Annual reviews of statements of special educational need are very well organised and there is a high level of attendance by students at their own review meeting. Students also provide a brief report about how well they think their needs are being met in advance of the meeting. Students are very pleased with the level of support they receive in college. The SENCO meets regularly with the student support services co-ordinator to review the learning, social, emotional and personal needs of students and this is very effective in ensuring that students who are experiencing problems and difficulties receive effective support.

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

### **Parents' views of the college**

86. Most parents are very supportive of the college and confirm that it has many strong features. High proportions of those responding to the questionnaire confirm that their children like college. They believe that the college expects their children to work hard and they feel that their children are making good progress. They also feel comfortable about approaching the college with a problem and they feel that the college is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Parents are pleased with the leadership shown by the principal. Inspection evidence confirms these positive views of parents.
87. Some parents responding to the questionnaire expressed reservations about the amount of work their children are expected to do at home. They do not feel that they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on and they do not feel that the college works closely with parents. Many parents are concerned that there is a high turnover of staff. Inspection evidence supports these concerns.

### **The quality of information provided**

88. The information to parents is unsatisfactory overall. Whilst the college keeps them informed about many aspects of the college, it does not adequately keep them in touch with what is happening in the curriculum and how students are achieving. The college prospectus is detailed, clear and comprehensive, as is the governors' annual report to parents. They give parents a good overview of the college's values and curriculum. In addition, the high quality 'Witchford Vision' newsletter and the website keep parents updated regarding current activities.
89. The reporting of students progress and achievement is unsatisfactory although statutory requirements are met. Parents and guardians receive an annual written report and there is a parents' evening arranged for each year group. The results of students in their end of Key Stage 3 tests are reported to their parents or guardians. In addition,

each half term, parents and guardians also receive a summary report of effort grades. However, the half-termly reports contain no information on students' progress. There is no guidance for teachers in the college policy document to support them when writing reports or to ensure consistency across the annual subject reports. Reports do not consistently include comments on what students know, understand, can do, the progress they have made and curricular targets. Although there is a target at the end of each subject report, these generally refer to attitudes and behaviour. Reports are not checked sufficiently well for spelling and grammatical errors before they are sent out.

### **Parents' involvement and contribution**

90. The contribution of parents to their children's learning at home and at the college is in line with most similar institutions. Parents and other adults are encouraged to involve themselves in the life of the college, and a number continue to respond positively. High proportions of parents attend the parents' evenings and are supportive of the work that their children are expected to do at home. Many parents regularly check that the homework diaries are maintained and homework is completed. The Parents and Staff Association continues to be active in fundraising and organising events in support of the college. The college values highly the contributions made by parents that enhance the children's learning and personal development.
91. There is a high level of attendance and participation by parents at the annual review meetings held for students who have a statement of special educational needs. Targets set in the individual education plans for all students with special educational needs are often vague. For example, the target may be recorded as 'spelling', but the spellings which the student should learn are not recorded. Parents, therefore, have limited opportunity to support their children with these targets or to contribute more actively to the setting of the targets. There are a number of booklets written for parents to help them to support their child; for example, how to listen to their child read to them at home.

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

### **Leadership**

92. On balance, the leadership of the college is good. There is strong leadership from the principal and the vice-principals. Subject leadership is more variable, with some very good but with shortfalls in some key areas.
93. The principal has created a clear vision for Witchford as an inclusive college where all can benefit from what it has to offer and achieve highly. The changes which he has instigated since his appointment have been consistent with this vision, and the college has developed the capacity to make rapid improvement. Governors share and support this vision, and their contribution to shaping the direction of the college is very good.
94. The college executive team, which includes the principal and two vice-principals, works as an effective and cohesive team. Through their work with middle managers the ethos of the college has been shared and now pervades the documentation and much classroom practice. Most teachers reflect on their work and are positive about identifying ways to improve.
95. The achievement of attaining Sports College status for September 2003 is evidence of effective leadership. The college community pulled together to create the plans and to raise funding. This development is entirely appropriate to meet the inclusion aspirations

and to tackle the development priority of raising boys' attainment.

96. The process of change has been well managed although the effectiveness of the changes have been hampered by the large staff turnover. The introduction of the student support service has had a significant impact on the inclusive nature of the college. New systems for monitoring the quality of education have made teachers more accountable for the progress of their students. Whilst there is evidence of this being effective in some subjects, the recruitment problem has been largely responsible for less change in others. The changes in the functions of the pastoral team have been effectively managed, resulting in improvement in the monitoring of students' achievements.

## **Management**

97. Overall, the college management is good. Senior staff have good management skills but there are weaknesses in some areas of the school.
98. The management structure of the school was revised by the current principal and is efficient and effective. As well as the executive team there is a college management group including primary liaison co-ordinator, the Director of Sport and the Community Manager. The curriculum leadership group deals with cross-college developments and consists of the subject leaders and year co-ordinators.
99. The principal and vice-principals have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching in the college. They have a systematic programme for lesson observation which includes the observations for performance management. The evaluation of teaching influences the development plan. The analysis of students' achievements to identify areas of strength and weakness is at an early stage of development. They are aware of the power of this analysis but only some subject leaders have used data with their teams.
100. The college development planning is satisfactory. The plan is a lengthy document to which all staff have contributed. It identifies common aspects for development and sets appropriate whole college targets. However, there is a lack of coherence about the identified changes; each subject area has chosen its own priorities for change, some of which are unlikely to be effective in making improvements to standards. The introduction of literacy across the curriculum is an exception and is detailed below. It is evident in the minutes of line-management meetings that the agenda for improvement is more focused in reality than the documentation suggests. The 'Toolbox', a list of strategies targeted at improving the achievement of boys, is a good example of work outside the development plan.
101. The management of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is good; the effect of the training and subsequent developments are being monitored. Aspects of the Strategy are being incorporated into the school development plan. For example, a literacy co-ordinator has been in post for two years and a college literacy strategy group is developing a college literacy policy. The effect of an emphasis on literacy skills on teaching generally has been described as 'invigorating' and teachers are very positive in their assessment of the gains so far. A literacy working party, with representatives from many subject departments, meets twice a term with the main aim of informing colleagues in their subjects of issues to do with improving students' speaking and listening, and reading and writing. All subject departments have identified literacy targets as part of their development plans and these have been combined into the college plan to improve standards of literacy. All teachers have received professional training to develop their

teaching of literacy skills.

102. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. There has been a whole college 'numeracy across the curriculum' day. However, there has not been an audit across all curricular areas and there is no numeracy policy in place. The newly appointed numeracy co-ordinator has identified clearly the priorities for developing numeracy skills across the curriculum.
103. There is an effective and rigorous line-management system in the college. Each member of the executive team meets fortnightly with the subject and year group leaders that they line-manage. Line-management meetings are effective for staff development and for monitoring quality of the provision in each area of the school. The focus over the last year has been on improving subject leaders' skills to monitor teaching and support new or agency staff. There has been little regard to the changes identified in the development plan.
104. Communications in the college are generally very good. The staff handbook is clear and provides information about systems, dates, roles and responsibilities. Good, clear job descriptions are available for new staff and for those who have new roles or responsibilities in the college. Subject leaders are clear about the expectations of the executive team. There is effective transfer of information about students. Minutes of management meetings are distributed to all staff and clearly indicate decisions and points for action.
105. The community education programme is very well managed and makes a tremendous contribution to the life of the school. The programme is complex but responsive to need and requires liaison with many different agencies.
106. Subject leadership and management is generally good. It is excellent in art and design and PE, and very good in science, music and history. In these subjects there is a clear direction for the work, effective schemes of work and a shared willingness to improve. In geography and modern foreign languages, management is good; it is satisfactory in English and design and technology.
107. There is currently unsatisfactory leadership and management of mathematics. In ICT and citizenship, leadership and co-ordination of the subjects across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. The standards in RE are very low in Key Stage 4 because the management of the subject is unsatisfactory.

### **Management of SEN provision**

108. The special educational needs provision is very well managed and organised by the special educational needs co-ordinator. There are excellent links with subject departments and with the student support services' co-ordinator, which effectively monitors and identifies students' needs. Subject departments have clear policy statements on meeting the special educational needs of students. Teaching assistants have regular meetings with the SENCO to review students' progress. Appraisal is in place to support them and to develop their skills. Training is provided.

### **Governing body**

109. Governors fulfil their strategic role effectively. They identified that Sports College status was desirable and made this a priority for the new principal. They are also clear of the need to improve the progress that students make through the college.



110. The governing body is organised into more committees than are usually seen but each has clear terms of reference. There is effective communication within the governing body facilitated by an able clerk. The governors bring a range of professional expertise to the school and advise the principal on matters such as finance and perform fully the role of critical friend.
111. The governing body is holding the college management to account. Challenging performance targets have been set for the principal. Governors are fully involved in reviewing performance standards, using national data and setting targets with the LEA. All governors interviewed were able to identify strengths and weaknesses in the college's provision and were aware of the measures that school leadership is taking to address problems.
112. Governors fulfil most of their statutory duties. There is a full set of policies although some are in need of review. Areas they do not yet address fully are: the provision for RE to meet the agreed syllabus requirements; the provision of a daily act of collective worship; and the development of formal risk assessments in the management of health and safety.

### **Financial management and deployment of resources**

113. Financial planning and monitoring are good. The school carried forward a deficit last year due to an unplanned expenditure associated with the Sports College bid. This was with the approval of governors and was effective in that the funding was secured for the good of the college. Financial planning for the future is effective, although it relies on increased income from lettings to cover shortfalls due to a lower-than-expected basic grant.
114. The day-to-day financial management is excellent. Good quality monitoring information is produced regularly, and the college has acted on the very few issues that were in the latest auditor's report. Effective steps are taken to ensure that best value is gained from contracts and have resulted in some recent changes. All grants the college receives for specific purposes are individually accounted for and monitoring reports are prepared.
115. Staff mobility has been higher than average in the last two years. The majority of teachers are well qualified and capable, but the college has had to make use of a significant number of temporary teachers to cover unfilled vacancies or cover long-term absence for illness or for maternity leave. This has caused parents to be concerned as there has been a significant impact on mathematics and modern languages. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection was almost all by temporary staff or very recently arrived, newly qualified teachers.
116. The college has invested more than is usual in the number of administrative staff to relieve teachers of routine tasks. There is also an above average number of support staff who assist in lessons. These are very effectively deployed to support students with special educational needs, although more planning time with the teachers would improve this provision further. There is inadequate time for the ICT technician, which is hindering the development of the use of computers across the school.
117. Induction and staff development programmes are good. The performance management of staff is undertaken well and fully in line with the national practice. The college undertakes a significant amount of initial teacher training and the students are well supported.

118. Money is appropriately allocated to subjects on a formula basis to maintain the resources needed for the curriculum. A further sum is available for development work which has to be approved by the college leadership group and be part of a development plan.
119. Spending on ICT has increased in the last two years but the number of computers available is well below the national average, and the college has insufficient ICT resources to support learning in many subjects. However, the investment in new computers to support management and improve communication is being used effectively. Also, the good investment in PE and in the facilities in the Electronic Learning Environment is helping students develop greater independence in these subjects.
120. There are very good resources to support learning in art and design, and PE, and good resources in geography, history and English. There is a shortage of text books in mathematics, and not enough resources to support RE, citizenship or modern languages. There is insufficient equipment in science to allow all to have access to experimental work; some is old and in need of up-grading. Music has fewer resources than normally found and this affects the quality of what can be achieved in Key Stage 4.
121. A significant amount was spent on the premises in the last financial year and the changes to the environment have contributed to the pleasant working atmosphere in the college. There is sufficient specialist accommodation although some laboratories are in need of new furniture and one of the music rooms is too small for the big classes placed in there.

### **Progress since the previous report**

122. The college has maintained and built upon the strengths reported in the last inspection report of 1997. Satisfactory progress has been made in most of the key issues for improvement. With the appointment of the current principal came a sharp focus on developing teaching skills and raising achievement. The college has significantly improved line-management arrangements and its procedures of self-evaluation so that there is now a capacity for rapid improvement
123. The quality of teaching has improved and the reported weakness in Year 9 no longer exists. The overall standards attained at age 14 have improved slightly faster than the national rate, and at age 16, in 2002, match the national average. However, whilst most girls make satisfactory progress, it is still the case that many boys do not.
124. Good quality schemes of work are in place for most subjects, although those for mathematics are underdeveloped. Monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders has much improved. Whilst marking has become more regular and systematic, students are still not sufficiently informed about what they need to do to improve.
125. Much has been done to improve standards in literacy and there are improvements in this area. Standards in numeracy are no longer a weakness.
126. There has been some improvement in the provision for ICT but this remains an area for development. Students now receive the National Curriculum requirement of a short course in ICT and some subjects are making good use of ICT to enhance learning. There has been good staff training but there has not been effective co-ordination of the work across the curriculum.

127. The provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 remains a weakness. The college introduced a course when a head of subject was appointed but this has not been properly managed since she left post. There remains a need to improve the provision for students' spiritual development as well as regular acts of collective worship.

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

128. To further improve, parents, governors and staff should:

- (1) Seek to develop further that all students make good progress by:
  - implementing with more rigour the strategies which have been shown to work in some curriculum areas, such as PE, science, art and design and music;
  - ensuring the consistent, rigorous and on-going use of data to allow for early identification of underachievement; and
  - ensuring that all teachers are aware of how to recognise and identify appropriate progress in their subject.(ref paragraphs 5,6,10,11,83,84)
- (2) Make improvements to the curriculum by:
  - providing more vocational courses;
  - increasing the time allotted to PSHE and citizenship;
  - ensuring that the provision of RE in Key Stage 4 meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus; and
  - providing more opportunities for spiritual development.(ref paragraphs 55,57,60,71)
- (3) Improve the provision of ICT by:
  - increasing the ICT resources;
  - widening opportunities for students to use ICT to enhance learning in all subjects;
  - ensuring effective monitoring and assessment of students' achievements in ICT; and
  - providing more technician support.(ref paragraphs 55,57,107,118, 119)
- (4) Improve the quality of feedback to students and their parents by:
  - ensuring all subjects adopt a marking policy that allows students to see where they have been successful and what needs to be done to improve; and
  - in reports to parents, showing how their child has progressed, what they have achieved and what needs to be done to improve within the subject.(ref paragraphs 50,89)

Further points for improvement that the governors should consider.

Improve systems for whole-college risk assessment. Paragraph 112

Create more coherence in development plans. Paragraph 100

Increasing the range of extra-curricular provision. Paragraph 61

Improve resources for mathematics, science, RE and music. Paragraph 120

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES FOR INSPECTIONS

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Overall the provision for community education is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Dynamic and enthusiastic leadership at all levels.
- The excellent provision for Traveller education.
- The extent and quality of the youth service provision.
- The contribution to the wider curriculum of both the youth service and Traveller education programmes.
- Adult learners have access to a wide range of opportunities, both for accreditation and for recreational interest.

#### Areas for improvement

- Introduce a more systematic mapping of the impact of the youth programme on the achievement of those who take part.
- Explore ways of widening the accreditation available for students through the community education programmes.

129. Community education is a strength of the college. It has a positive impact on a large number of students whose opportunities are enhanced through their involvement in the wide range of activities on offer. The programme is very well led and managed by a member of the college management team and has benefited from the commitment shown by the principal. The chair of the community association attends the governors' community committee. The community education office is situated at the heart of the college and has a high profile. The college has recently provided the youth team with its own premises on the college site and thus increased the impact it has.

130. The youth programme offers a range of activities, on site and in the local villages. About a third of the college's population is involved in activities ranging from the Millennium Volunteers scheme to the song and dance group. A characteristic of every aspect of the programme is the way in which students are given responsibility. Older students act as junior leaders running dance groups for younger students, chairing meetings and taking responsibility for the website and the newsletter. There is a growing tradition of students becoming paid youth workers when they leave college and, in some cases, undertaking training for a career in youth work. This is a reflection of the skilful leadership in the youth team and the way in which the activities are tailored to meet the needs of individuals. The programme has had a very significant impact on potentially disaffected students, many of whom are actively encouraged to become involved.

131. The youth programme has had a positive impact on the wider curriculum of the college and its involvement in the community. The song and dance group stages concerts for the community and takes part in competitions. For the last three years the members of the group have been East of England champions. There are also two bands which play at college and community events. The management of the website and the newsletter has enhanced the student' ICT and communication skills. Students have become involved in bid writing, fundraising and parish council activities, thus gaining practical experience of citizenship. Some of the youth activities have developed because of the problems caused by young people in their community. The programme to address this has been so successful that the students involved led their village's successful bid to win the national 'village of the year competition'. Crime and vandalism in the village have both been reduced. About 80 per cent of young people in this village are involved in the youth activities. Although the college can point to the impact of the programme on individual students, there is scope for a more systematic monitoring of the impact on students' attendance, behaviour and achievement.
132. The Traveller education programme is excellent. It not only provides opportunities for the Traveller community but has enhanced the curriculum for all students. PSHE lessons have been developed for use in Years 7 and 8 to increase understanding of the Traveller community. Training sessions have been held for all staff, and the Traveller education team is involved in the induction of new staff and student teachers.
133. Traveller students are extremely well supported. New arrivals are admitted to the college quickly and given support to enable them to integrate into the college. There is good communication with parents and great sensitivity about their needs. Students are not only supported in college but are provided with distance learning materials and telephone and ICT support when they are travelling. This level of support has enabled Traveller students to sit GCSE examinations. Links have been established with a Traveller college in Bulgaria, and an exchange group from Bulgaria has visited the college. Traveller students have had their curriculum enhanced further through the youth programme.
134. Traveller poets and artists have had an impact on the wider curriculum. For example, a poetry programme in Year 7 was based on the work of a Traveller poet. Two books of artwork and poetry have been produced to celebrate the work of the Traveller community.
135. The adult education programme is varied and well supported. Accredited courses are available through links with a further education college. Courses are run both during the school day and in the evening, thus reinforcing the lifelong learning message to students. Classes range from basic skills sessions to accredited courses in pre-school education. The European computer driving licence course has involved adults from the community, teachers and college students. Adult participants range in age from school leavers to 80 year olds. The adult programme is very well run and monitored. Tutors are given plenty of guidance, the quality of delivery is regularly monitored and sessions are well planned and delivered. Consumer research is carried out to ensure that the programme offered meets student needs. The activities are well advertised through brochures, a market stall in Ely and an annual fun day offering taster sessions. The latter involves students who provide entertainment and refreshments as well as acting as guides. There is scope for more links to be made between the adult education programme and the college curriculum.

136. The community programme is fully inclusive, involving learners of all ages and abilities. The youth programme is open to all students and deliberately aims to widen the opportunities of the most vulnerable. Local students from special schools have been involved in activities, thus increasing their involvement in their community.

## PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	155
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	62

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	39	47	50	10	1	0
Percentage	5	25	31	32	6	1	0

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

### Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the college's roll	862
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free college meals	78

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	16
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	151

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

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
College data	7.5
National comparative data	7.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.9
National comparative data	1.2

*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 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	93	88	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	67	67
	Girls	58	61	63
	Total	110	128	130
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	61 (70)	71 (77)	72 (74)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	23 (48)	50 (51)	35 (45)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	69	73
	Girls	66	65	70
	Total	131	134	143
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	75 (66)	75 (73)	79 (71)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	33 (38)	51 (50)	56 (40)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	73	79	152

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	27	68	68
	Girls	48	75	75
	Total	75	143	143
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	49 (53)	94 (95)	94 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per student	College	41.0
	National	39.8

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

## Ethnic background of students

## Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	823	49	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	12	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	16	8	0

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

## Teachers and classes

## Financial information

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42.7
Number of students per qualified teacher	20.2

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	416

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.4
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28.8
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Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,258,541
Total expenditure	2,264,963
Expenditure per student	2,628
Balance brought forward from previous year	-14,978
Balance carried forward to next year	-21,400

Key Stage 4	23.4
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	23.43
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	22.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	862
Number of questionnaires returned	236

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	53	7	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	59	16	3	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	56	19	6	2
The teaching is good.	18	66	9	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	52	20	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	40	8	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	45	5	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	48	21	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	28	54	8	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	57	8	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	49	14	3	16

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- A committed team of teachers with good knowledge of their subject.
- Teachers know their students well, manage them well and develop good relationships in lessons giving students the confidence to develop ideas and skills.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11, especially of boys and of students with low prior attainment.

#### Areas for improvement

- Better planning of mixed ability lessons as a sequence of learning activities to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment.
- More systematic reference to National Curriculum levels of attainment so that students in Year 9 have clearer understanding of their own learning.
- More thorough checking that students are correcting and have learned from the mistakes identified on marked work.

137. Attainment in English of students entering in Year 7 is broadly in line with national levels. In 2002, the attainment of students in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was below that of all schools nationally. It was also below that of similar schools, as indicated by the proportion eligible for free school meals, and well below the level indicated by the students' prior attainment in English. Sixty-one per cent of students achieved Level 5 or better and 23 per cent attained Level 6 or better. This was lower than in the other core subjects, mathematics and science, at this age and girls achieved better than boys. Attainment in 2002 was significantly below that of 2001 when attainment had been particularly high. Teachers' assessment of attainment at the end of Year 9 was much higher than the levels achieved by students in the tests. Overgenerous judgements of students' performance can be partly explained by assessment of speaking and listening skills which are not measured by the written National Curriculum tests, but nevertheless indicate a degree of uncertainty in assessing students. In recent years the trend in improvement in English has been higher than the national trend.

138. In 2002, attainment in English and English literature at GCSE was below the national figure and lower than that achieved in similar schools. Two out of five students achieved grades A\*-C while the national proportion and the proportion achieved by the college in previous years was well over half. In 2002, GCSE results in English literature were better than in English (language) but still recorded a significant drop in attainment over previous years. One factor in the low attainment at GCSE was that nearly one third of students entered gained grade D, including a large number of boys. Girls' results at age 16 are better than those of boys, but the difference in attainment is reducing and is less than the difference nationally. Performance in the mock examinations and moderated GCSE coursework appears to indicate that the department's target of 65 per cent of students achieving grades A\*-C is possible after the dip in attainment of 2002.

139. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment in English were in line with

national standards in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to students' prior attainment. In the classroom, students' speaking and listening skills are average overall for both boys and girls. Teachers ensure that all students are involved in discussion. Higher-attaining students give extended answers, listening to and building on the responses of others. Boys and girls in Year 9 were heard giving good accounts of their group's judgement of 'Martian' poems, with clear expression and appropriate critical language. Students recognise and use Standard English appropriately in formal discussion. Reading skills are above those normally seen for most students and students make satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 9. A student in Year 8 read a complete chapter of 'Boy' with impressive fluency and awareness of the humour. Another Year 8 boy read the part of Mrs Rybeero from 'Buddy' in a convincing impression of a Jamaican accent. Reading tasks also include reading for research, both from printed sources and from the Internet. Scrutiny of written work indicated that most students take a pride in their work and make satisfactory progress. There was little evidence of unfinished or poorly presented assignments and the scrutiny revealed some very good personal and imaginative writing from middle and high attaining students. Students with the least developed writing skills discuss ideas well, but are often required to produce only short responses in exercises and have insufficient opportunities for extended writing. Students with special educational needs receive good support and make good progress.

140. The work seen in English is of a higher standard than normally seen in Years 10 and 11. Speaking and listening skills are well developed by good teaching. Students were observed discussing challenging topics, including civil rights, parenting responsibilities and seduction with mature and sensitive use of language. Key words and concepts are well taught so that students become increasingly competent in the use of technical terms, like bathos and pathetic fallacy in discussions of literature and drama. Low-attaining students make valid judgements about characters and situations. High-attaining students and those of average attainment evaluate figurative language and other elements of style and relate them to the author's intentions. Year 10 students working on 'Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde' maintained the same high level of critical skills working in small groups that they used in discussions led by the teacher. Many low attaining students achieve well and a group of boys were making good progress studying specially adapted versions of difficult metaphysical poems. However, the writing skills of the lowest attaining students are below national standards and lower than their standards of speaking and listening. The content is relevant and the ideas coherent but there are technical errors of expression, grammar and spelling in the writing and the least able still make mistakes with capital letters for names and full stops at the end of sentences. Work scrutinised during the inspection showed that students write readily and fluently on a range of tasks, including literature, media studies and creative writing. The highest attaining students produce original well-crafted assignments with sensitive intelligent use of language and good spelling and grammar. Stories like 'John, the lost boy' were evidence of creative writing of high quality. Students of all abilities use ICT skills well to produce attractive and well organised written work.
141. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, in half of the lessons observed the standard of teaching was good. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed, taught by an unqualified teacher. In the other lessons the teaching was judged to be satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and teach basic skills of literacy well so that students make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. Teachers are good role models, treating students well and demonstrating high expectations of work and behaviour to which students respond positively. Teachers manage discussion well with good 'follow-up' questions requiring explanation or proof to support students' statements. Good teaching

was seen which emphasised the importance of selective and critical reading. A weakness of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is that schemes of work do not result in consistently demanding learning experiences for all students in mixed ability classes so that all students are not working at or near their capacity. The aims of the lesson are planned in terms of the content and procedures rather than the activities and gains of students of different levels of ability. Some lessons which were in other respects good, contained large periods of teacher-directed activity aimed at the whole class, and too small a proportion of the lesson time for students to work at their own level, either individually or in groups. As a result, some students lost interest in the work and had to be brought back to task, with some loss of time, by the teacher. Good teaching exploits every opportunity to develop literacy skills and students make good progress, but more elements of the National Literacy Strategy and the Key Stage 3 Strategy could be included in lesson planning. Students' work is well marked, with encouraging recognition of personal achievement. Reference to National Curriculum levels of attainment for major assignments and for work in Year 9 would give students a clearer understanding of their own progress in relation to national standards. The scrutiny of students' work revealed that the very thorough marking of mistakes does not result in corrections or improvements.

142. In Years 10 and 11, good teaching encourages students to develop positive attitudes towards the subject and they listen to one another and discuss other people's views with respect. For this age range the teaching more successfully set clear targets and then challenged students through a variety of individual and group activities and a range of related tasks.
143. Students make good progress in relation to their earlier attainment. For example, a Year 11 class of low-attaining students preparing pre-release examination material worked on a very-well-planned variety of tasks, maintained a very brisk pace and remained on task to achieve very well. Teachers are quick to praise good work, and lessons end with a positive evaluation of what has been achieved. Marking in Years 10 and 11 is very thorough and accurate so that students know precisely how the quality of their work compares to grades at GCSE and have a clear understanding of what is needed to improve. For all years, homework is well planned and related to the work covered in the lesson.
144. The department is well managed by an acting head of department; a new head of communications has been appointed for the next school year. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in spite of staffing changes. The decline in last year's results is part of a longer trend of overall improvement. The results in the mock examinations and the quality of the moderated GCSE coursework appear to indicate that the department is likely to hit its targets for the present year. The acting head of department leads a team of teachers who are receptive to new ideas and who work well together. Classrooms are attractive and the atmosphere in lessons is good, contributing to the quality of the educational experience enjoyed by students. The curriculum is good for Years 7 to 9 with well-planned programmes of study. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is well planned to meet the requirements of GCSE specifications. The range of learning experiences out of lessons is good. In all years the curriculum in English makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of students.

145. There is good potential for future improvement.

## **DRAMA**



Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching results in very high attainment by students.
- Challenging lessons mean that students respond very well, with high levels of intellectual, physical and creative effort.
- The subject makes a very valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of students.
- There is a very good range of learning opportunities in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, including an annual production, theatre visits and drama clubs.

#### Areas for improvement

- Lack of appropriate space means that some groups are taught in the college hall or in a classroom.
- The subject should be making greater use of ICT, for example digital and video cameras, so that students can see and evaluate their work.

146. Attainment in drama is very good and above the national average. In Years 7 to 9, attainment in drama is broadly in line with national expectations. In 2002, attainment at GCSE was higher than in any other subject. More than 70 per cent of students gained the higher grades of A\*-C. Almost 30 per cent gained grades A\* or A, and no one achieved less than a grade D. The trend over the last three years has been one of sustained improvement.
147. Work seen during the inspection confirmed above-average attainment by students. In a Year 9 lesson, students who were beginning a challenging cross-curricular art, music and drama project on colours and emotions, were at the same time successfully being introduced to difficult Brechtian theories about theatre of alienation that would more usually be taught at GCSE. The high quality of the drama lessons means that students learn appropriate drama skills and also learn to develop their own original ideas and to work responsibly with others on joint projects. Year 11 students at the end of their course were observed experimenting with mime and 'physical theatre' techniques to develop very good performance skills. Drama makes a very valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Teaching and learning observed in drama were never less than very good; in half of the lessons seen the teaching was excellent, producing work of the highest standards and quality. Students enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers so that very well managed discussions at the planning stage, and skilful demonstrations of the techniques that might be used, give them the confidence to experiment. Some effective video recording and projection have been used, but there is scope for the department to develop further its use of ICT.
148. The subject is very well led, with impressive commitment and vision. High expectations about achievement are enthusiastically passed on to students who respond by working very maturely and achieving very well. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The quality of the teaching and the attainment of the students indicate that there is good scope for sustained progress in the future.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Provision for the most able students in Year 9.
- Students work well in pairs, giving each other support.

### Areas for improvement

- Development of the schemes of work at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Full analysis of the performance of students in the Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations to inform departmental priorities.
- Students do not receive sufficient written feedback to inform them of what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of teaching styles.

149. In 2002, the test results at the end of Key Stage 3 took a dip but there had been significant improvement in 2001, and the trend over the last three years shows improvement. Overall, the results in 2002 were in line with the national average but performance was above the national average for students gaining Level 6 and above. Based on prior attainment, results at Key Stage 3 were well below what would be expected.
150. Results at GCSE are improving and in 2002 were in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C increased by 12 per cent in 2002. The percentage of students gaining A\* and A grades also rose in 2002 but remains below the national figure. The performance of boys at grades A\* and A was particularly low.
151. Overall, standards at the end of Year 9 are satisfactory and most students are making sound progress throughout Key Stage 3. Students across the ability range generally describe their calculation strategies but they do not have as wide a range of strategies as is normally seen. Some lower-attaining students struggle to recall multiplication facts and do not have the strategies to enable them to derive answers from other known facts. Lower-attaining students demonstrate a good understanding of place value and apply this to the multiplication of a two-digit number by a single digit number. When middle-attaining students are working on an investigation task they make and test a prediction but they are unable to fully explain their generalisations. Provision for the most-able students in Year 9 is good. Students in the accelerated group, who will be taking their GCSE mathematics examination at the end of Year 10, are making good progress. They have a good knowledge of similarity and the relationship between linear, area and volume scale factors but they find it difficult to apply this knowledge to questions set in context.
152. The standard of students' work at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory overall, and students make sound progress across the key stage. Lower-attaining students use a calculator to find a percentage of a given quantity. They mentally calculate percentages such as 50 per cent, 25 per cent and 10 per cent but they lack the understanding to extend this knowledge to mentally calculate 20 per cent of a quantity. The standard of students' work in the Year 11 middle-attaining sets is variable across the sets. In one set, where the teaching was unsatisfactory, students were unable to correctly recall and apply Pythagoras' theorem. In another set where teaching was good, students had a good knowledge and understanding of trigonometry in a right-angled triangle and used

the trigonometric relationships to solve examination-style questions. Higher-attaining students solved trigonometry problems in non-right-angled triangles but lacked the required understanding to successfully solve quadratic equations by completing the square.

153. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics are good overall. In almost two thirds of lessons observed, the teaching was good or better. Teaching was very good or excellent in three lessons and at least satisfactory in all but two lessons. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In all the best lessons students were actively involved. For example, where teaching was excellent, the teacher involved all students in the starter activity by giving them small white boards to record their answers. The teacher quickly identified any misconceptions and supported these students in their learning. Where teaching was unsatisfactory this was because the teachers had spent too long explaining the mathematics to the students and gave them insufficient opportunity to either contribute during the explanation or to consolidate their skills. All teachers need to widen their range of teaching styles to meet the needs of all learners.
154. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they generally use this well to plan for progression in learning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the group had selected a hypothesis and the teacher used her knowledge of statistical analysis to support students in developing a structured approach to prove or disprove the hypothesis. There is some use of starter activities in Key Stage 3 but these are not a regular feature of most lessons. Where starter activities were used well, the activity was clearly linked to the main learning objective and challenged all students; for example, in a Year 9 lesson on similarity where the students were challenged to use multi-link cubes to construct an object twice the size of the one that the teacher had constructed. Learning progressed at a rapid rate as students worked in pairs to build and then refine their constructions. There are large quantities of unmarked work in students' exercise books; most of the marking that is done is ticking of work. Teachers generally do not give sufficient written feedback to students to inform them of what they could do to improve. Although teaching is good in Key Stage 3, the current grouping arrangements are having a negative impact on the achievement and progress of students in Years 7 and 9. There is a loss of continuity in learning when Year 7 students move between mixed ability groups for two lessons and ability sets for the other two lessons, and when Year 9 students move from being taught in six groups for three of their lessons to five groups for the fourth lesson.
155. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. The large majority of students enjoy their mathematics lessons and are keen to learn. They collaborate well in pairs and this has a positive effect on their learning. Teachers manage behaviour well, and relationships between teachers and students were respectful during the inspection.
156. The leadership and management of the mathematics department are unsatisfactory. The acting head of department, who has only been in post for a few weeks, has clear and appropriate priorities for what needs to be achieved by the department during the summer term. However, there is no clear direction for the department based on a full analysis of students' performance in tests and examinations. There is no use of value-added analysis to identify groups of students who are underachieving. There has also been no analysis of coursework and examination marks to identify the effect of students' performance in the examination-board-marked coursework tasks and the non-calculator paper on their final grades at GCSE. There is no evidence of formal monitoring of teaching and learning by the head of department, but there is evidence that teachers are working well together and have done some joint planning and peer observation. There are insufficient resources in the department. In one lesson observed, there were

insufficient textbooks for students to share one between two. Students are sharing calculators that are in a very poor state of repair, some with symbols scratched off.

157. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. There is still no policy for numeracy across the curriculum, schemes of work remain underdeveloped; and, although there is some evidence of use of ICT to support learning, this is not planned into the schemes of work. There are insufficient opportunities to develop and sharpen students' numeracy skills across all year groups.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Results in GCSE double science are very good and well above average.
- The science department is managed and led very effectively by the head of department.
- Schemes of work are of good quality supporting teaching and learning.
- The very good teaching observed in some lessons can provide a model for colleagues in the department.
- Good strategies for using attainment and assessment data to plan and teach lessons.
- Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour assist their learning in most lessons.
- There is good technical support.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that all classes benefit from at least satisfactory teaching and learning by dealing effectively with the disruptive and poor behaviour of a small minority of students.
- Marking is undertaken regularly but does not offer sufficient advice on how students can improve.
- Further increase the use of information technology in the teaching of science.
- Increase the amount of standard laboratory equipment available, for example, the number of electronic balances. This will enable all students to participate more fully in practical activities.

158. At age 14, the results in the 2002 national tests were above both the national average and results achieved by similar schools, continuing the pattern of the last three years. Boys achieved slightly higher results than girls. The GCSE results in 2002 were significantly above the national average. This is particularly good given the entry of a higher percentage of students than that normally found in other schools. Although boys overall achieved slightly higher results than girls, girls achieved significantly more A\*/A grades than did boys.

159. In the work seen in lessons and from students' written work, standards are good and most students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Students of all abilities produce work of good quality. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' attainment. Standards are highest in lessons that are well paced and actively engage and place intellectual demands on the students. For example, in scientific enquiry a majority of students in a Year 9 class investigating water loss from apple slices, drew appropriate conclusions from the experiment and considered and explained the impact on their results of potential variations in environmental factors. Practical skills are well developed and most students work with care. The contributions made by science to the development of students' numeracy and literacy skills is satisfactory; for example, in the teaching of graphical skills and scientific formulae. At the introduction of each new topic, teachers provide students with a key words list. Word banks are

displayed in most laboratories.

160. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are good. All students follow a double science course that is based on a number of topics. All students follow the core curriculum with higher level students studying each topic in more depth. Teachers provide each student with an appropriate skills list of 'can do' statements which form the basis for self-evaluation. All students are aware of their target grades and what is required to achieve each level. However, the practice of reviewing progress against the skills list is not consistently applied by all the teachers in the department. There is a strong emphasis on learning through practical, investigation skills and research methods, which provides a sound foundation for learning, as demonstrated in a lesson based on 'space', which required students to research the characteristics of the different planets in our solar system. Students had undertaken independent research using the Internet, brainstorming effectively the different characteristic features that might be used to explain the differences between the planets and were imaginatively preparing computer presentations to demonstrate features that would attract visitors from Earth. Standards are similar across the sciences, with no discernible differences in the standards of work between girls and boys as evidenced through questioning, practical skills or written standards. Gifted students have been identified and, in some lessons, are provided with additional work; however, practice is inconsistent across the department. There are opportunities for students to use information technology to enhance their learning but this is insufficiently developed.
161. Teaching is good overall, with some very good lessons. The teaching was very good in a quarter of lessons observed; only in a very small proportion was it not satisfactory. There is a good emphasis on developing students' scientific skills. In the most successful lessons, teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to challenge, broaden and enrich students' understanding of science. Consequently, students are making good progress. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives are clearly understood, teaching methods are challenging and students work at a good pace using appropriate resources that support their learning. The majority of students are well motivated and work with enthusiasm, as illustrated in a lesson based on identifying and selecting a safe drink for a diabetic from five unknown solutions. Following a brief and lively scene-setting video, students undertook a series of tests to identify the sugar and starch content of the five drinks. All groups identified the one drink that was safe to drink, and explained accurately the reasons for their choice. Consideration was given to a fair test. The lesson concluded with a student explaining how he controlled his diabetes which engaged the class in good discussion.
162. Teaching is unsatisfactory in a very small number of lessons where teachers fail to deal effectively with a minority of students who misbehave, disrupting the learning of others. In other double lessons, the pace of learning slows in the last quarter hour. The department's scheme of work provides a secure base for lesson planning. This is particularly important as, at the time of the inspection, there were no physics or chemistry specialists working in the science department. The department uses detailed worksheets to meet the needs of all students and sets homework regularly to extend students' learning. Most staff in their marking use encouraging comments but there are few references to help students identify ways that would help them improve their learning. A new system to address this has recently been introduced with some initial success and is welcomed by students.
163. The response of students to science teaching is very good in the majority of lessons. They show interest in science and are keen to learn. They show mutual respect. For example, in one lesson students were presenting the results of their research into car safety. The class listened carefully to each other's presentations, offering positive

comments as feedback to each other.

164. Overall, the leadership and management of the department are very good. Schemes of work are good. The science development plan fits well within the framework of the overall college development plan, although some of the planned activities are running a little behind time. It is pioneering the development of an interactive website for homework. The head of department has taken effective action to secure health and safety requirements relating to the storage of hazardous material. In order to improve further the learning opportunities of students studying science, consideration needs to be given to the level of resourcing; in some instances, there are insufficient standard items of equipment for class use and modern equipment, such as data-logging units, has still to be acquired. The teaching team is ably supported by experienced technicians.
165. Since the previous inspection the science department has made very good progress; for example, in the introduction of detailed schemes of work, a significant improvement in GCSE results, a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and a large reduction in the number of unsatisfactory lessons. Target setting has been strengthened, and more emphasis is placed on the use of information technology. However, although there has been some improvement at Key Stage 3, teacher assessments continue to be out of line with national expectations.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good; expectations are high and lessons are very well prepared.
- Students make excellent progress and produce highly creative and ambitious GCSE work.
- Leadership and management are energetic, effective and committed to improvement.

### Areas for improvements

- Refine teaching in Key Stage 3 to recognise all students' needs and, where necessary, engage them more fully.
- Continue to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' performance.
- Enrich students' experience further by increasing the contribution of practising artists and raising students' awareness of multicultural elements and influences.

166. The standard of art and design achieved by students aged 14 is above the national expectation, with a large proportion of students achieving at higher levels. At age 16, attainment is well above average and GCSE results were very high in 2002. More than a quarter of the group achieved A\* or A grades, and 85 per cent obtained a grade C or above. This was a typical year: results have frequently been 20 per cent or more above national results. The pass rate is excellent; students do better in art and design than in most of their other subjects. Boys' results have improved, and students with special educational needs achieve well. The consistent trend of high standards has been maintained for many years.
167. Students make rapid progress in Key Stage 3. They develop skill and understanding across a broad programme of challenging activities. This includes a systematic exploration of materials, conventions and styles and early critical analysis of their own

and other artists' work. Students develop strengths in tonal work, colour and observation. For example, in a lesson in Year 7, students made effective use of their knowledge of colour to make small watercolour landscape studies that showed subtlety and sensitivity. Homework is demanding and extends classwork significantly; sketchbooks provide evidence of regular, wide-ranging research and experimentation. This helps students to acquire the ability to work independently and to reflect at a personal level and many do this to an unusually high degree. The dialogue between teachers and students is mentally taxing and establishes a secure theoretical, as well as practical, base to learning. Most able students show originality and flair, but all students possess a remarkable amount of self-discipline. A few students who do not readily ask, need more help with complex activities.

168. On the GCSE programme, students develop in leaps and bounds. Technical skills and understanding are stretched. Students achieve a wide knowledge of different media and many of them take-up three-dimensional work enthusiastically. Students also acquire a well-built critical appreciation of artists' work and put this to good use in judging the direction and success of their own research and the practical development of ideas. Sketchbooks are used exceptionally well and, in the best examples, the standards reached are more often found on A-level courses, demonstrating a mature and energetic approach to experimentation, an ability to work independently and a deep involvement in the subject. The keys to ambitious, innovative work are thorough preparation and reflection. By the end of the course, students have become confident and competent young artists and talk about their intention to continue an interest into their adult lives.
169. The quality of teaching is good; it includes many examples of very good practice. It is challenging and self-critical and held together by an enormous commitment and meticulous organisation. Expectations are very high and clearly communicated. Schemes of work are extremely well prepared, and planning for lessons is effective, although occasionally inflexible. Lessons begin with a strong introduction that makes an appropriate link to previous learning and emphasises the importance of homework. Detailed demonstration and explanation ensure that students are clear about tasks and have thought through what they are undertaking; at times this was a little lengthy. Subject materials are particularly well designed and carefully produced so that they provide information, guidance and stimulation. Intended for taking home, they provide an invaluable means for parents to make an informed contribution to their children's learning and progress. Homework is also operated as a significant departmental strategy for raising standards, implemented conscientiously and integrated successfully with classroom activities. Teachers set substantial, long-term assignments, assess homework regularly and provide high-quality, personal feedback. Good practice in assessment extends to work within college and is applied equally well to younger and older age groups. It is systematic, well recorded and contributes strongly to students' knowledge of their own learning, describing strengths and what is needed and how to improve. Crucially, assessment criteria are shared and requirements discussed thoroughly with students. The classroom atmosphere and environment are managed firmly and with consistent rules that evoke a positive response and willing co-operation. Minor lapses in concentration were due to the demanding nature of tasks, although a few well-behaved students, of medium levels of attainment, received less attention than they needed when in large classes.
170. Students value and enjoy art and design and find that it interests them. They feel secure in a well-structured situation that encourages them to take risks. They are motivated and want to succeed and recognise the good role models provided by teachers. Trust and respect allow students to question what they are seeing and doing and to develop individuality. They use time carefully and sustain high levels of

concentration. Considerate and responsible behaviour support the good progress made in lessons. They take unaffected pride in their achievements.

171. Leadership and management of art and design are powerful. High standards and consistency have been maintained through effort and determination. Confident leadership provides clear direction of the subject, and the department challenges itself to improve its practices and provision continually. Strengths and weaknesses are identified from evidence, and processes for monitoring and evaluation are comprehensive and efficient. Effective action is taken to meet targets and, despite its successes, the subject is still progressing and building. Good teamwork ensures proficient day-to-day management; administration is secure, and experience has been brought to bear on producing high-quality, up-to-date documentation that is focused entirely on supporting learning. The curriculum offers variety and has been highly responsive to new initiatives such as the development of ICT and the recent achievement of the Artsmark Award.
172. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Boys' achievement has improved, although the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has not been closed significantly. Cross-curricular and community aspects have been strengthened, although the multicultural dimension needs further enhancement and links with other institutions are still developing. A variety of opportunities for three-dimensional work has been introduced and taken up keenly by students. ICT is very well embedded in students' learning and its use for creative, as well as research purposes, is better than is often found.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Students' understanding of how to sequence design activities.
- A wide range of GCSE courses.
- Good quality support for older students in structuring their design folders.
- Subject leadership is focused on raising attainment.
- Students have good attitudes to designing and making activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Making skills in resistant materials and systems and control.
- Examples of products for critical analysis and to stimulate students' ideas.
- Repetition of similar processes in Years 7 to 9, which leaves insufficient time to develop higher learning skills.
- Assessment is insufficiently precise in relation to standards achieved.

173. In recent years, teachers' assessments had been close to the national average at the end of Year 9 but they fell below average for girls and boys in 2002. There has been a downward trend in GCSE examination results. In 2002, 45 per cent of students gained a pass at grades A\*-C compared with 52 per cent nationally. However, not all students took a design and technology course, including a significant number of higher-attaining girls. When compared with their general achievement, students' results were good in food technology, resistant materials and textiles but poor in systems and control technology. Across the range of courses, girls' results were above average and those of boys were below average.



174. At age 14, standards are broadly average. Students have a good understanding of procedures for designing. They write a design brief and specification, setting out requirements for a product that they will design and make, and develop a satisfactory range of ideas. Students undertake appropriate research into items that they will design in some areas of study, such as developing ideas for making a personal recipe book in Year 8 food technology and mobile telephone casings in Year 9 graphics. In resistant materials, students' ideas are constrained because they do not have access to a wide range of products or source materials which stimulate their imagination. Skills in recording and presenting ideas are average overall. Girls show significantly greater capability in analysis when brainstorming a design context and they have better graphic skills than boys when communicating the designs they visualise. Students' making skills are less well developed than designing skills. Students use tools and equipment competently and safely, for example when making soup in Year 8 or money boxes in Year 9. However, the quality of finish is often below average in products made in resistant materials or in systems and control, particularly when students apply visual images to the items they have made. Overall, students make steady progress but girls make more rapid progress than boys, including students who have special educational needs. Higher-attaining students are often constrained from reaching high standards because units of work repeat design procedures instead of extending students' skills.
175. At age 16, standards broadly match nationally expected standards. Skills in designing are developed well but there are fewer examples of very high quality designing and making than is usually seen. The standard of design folios covers the full range and, because of good support from teachers, most students show good coverage of course objectives. Many lower-attaining students cover all required elements, but at below-average standards. Design specifications are often too imprecise, so when students come to evaluate their final products they lack sharp criteria. As a result, evaluations are often too general. Students have an appropriate understanding of commercial production methods. Many use ICT well to present their portfolios. They make appropriate use of presentational graphics for titles and they word process their research findings and questionnaires. Many use flow-chart templates competently to illustrate procedures and spreadsheets to present the results of surveys graphically. In food technology, students use a nutrition programme to analyse and redesign their food products, and in systems and control they use appropriate software to design electronic circuits. Hand-produced graphical representation is a weakness of many students. Of the relatively small sample of final products available, good quality making was seen in some board games produced in graphic products and fashion garments in textiles. As at earlier ages, girls' standards are higher than boys', particularly in design folders.
176. Students show a good level of interest in design and technology; in about one third of lessons their application is very good. When they work in pairs or small groups students demonstrate good levels of co-operation. They show respect for tools and equipment, working responsibly and safely. The short duration of some units of work in Years 7 to 9 restricts students' opportunities to develop initiative when investigating and researching ideas. A large majority of students in Year 11 show sound initiative by using ICT equipment in the college's learning resource centre or at home to enhance design presentation in coursework folders.
177. The quality of teaching is satisfactory; in about one third of lessons observed was good. Teachers' planning for lessons is sound overall, and is good in food technology and graphics. In these aspects the pace of learning is good. In some other areas of learning, objectives are not sufficiently well shared with students to enable them to be fully clear about what they will learn during the lesson. Management of students is good. Teachers establish effective routines for work and form positive but firm relationships with students. This creates a purposeful learning environment.

Expectations for completing GCSE coursework are good and teachers have produced clear guidance notes to support the production of design folders. Subject staff are responding actively to the college's drive to raise standards of literacy, with particular attention to the correct use of technical vocabulary. Marking is undertaken frequently and much includes helpful advice on how to improve work. However, assessment of work in Years 7 to 9 is insufficiently accurate. Too often, work is awarded a grade that is too high when matched to National Curriculum grade descriptions. Teachers are well aware of the needs of students with special educational needs. In some subject media areas little written material or guidance notes have been modified to match students' reading or understanding levels. A good resource was used in food technology in Year 8 to help students with literacy difficulties investigate the characteristics of recipe books.

178. Subject leadership is effectively promoting the college's aim to raise standards. Provision includes: increased tracking of students' progress during Years 10 and 11; support materials; personal feedback and opportunities for completing coursework at the end of the college day. Day-to-day management is sound. However, the subject development plan has too many priorities and this dilutes its impact. There is an appropriately broad curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and good choice of GCSE options in Years 10 and 11, but there are no vocational courses from which some students would benefit. Work across Years 7 to 9 covers National Curriculum requirements well, but units are not planned to enable students to deepen skills sufficiently in investigation and making. Monitoring across the subject is adequate, but the need to cover for staff absence has reduced opportunities for lesson observations this year. Resources are well maintained, but students' access to modern computers within subject rooms is restricted and there is limited hardware and software to enable students to learn using computer-aided design, control and manufacture.
179. Since the previous inspection, there has been steady progress. Standards remain similar. Marking to help students gain higher standards in coursework folders has improved and the subject has introduced projects reflecting ethnic diversity. Teaching has increased the applications of ICT. Raising the attainment of boys remains a challenge.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, overall, with many excellent features.
- Planning of lessons and the curriculum is very good.
- There are clear targets for the students and high teacher expectations, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- There is good differentiation of activities in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Students have very good attitudes to geography and display good behaviour.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment needs development to become integral to the planning, teaching and learning process.
- Some middle and higher-attaining students in Years 8 and 9 are not sufficiently challenged.

180. Teacher assessments of students at age 14 show that the percentage attaining Level 5 is in line with the national average. GCSE results for 2002 were an improvement on the previous year and are slightly above the national average, with 60.6 per cent attaining grade A\*-C and 100 per cent passing A\*-G grade. Girls obtained better grades than boys in 2002, in line with the national trend.

181. Students' attainment in geography is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Year 9, students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of tourism in a number of locations and the impact that tourism has on people and the environment. Work in Year 8 on climate was less satisfactory as processes were not linked to patterns and the more-able students were unable to progress beyond Level 5. Year 9 students made good progress in developing enquiry skills during a lesson requiring them to analyse a photograph and formulate geographical questions. Less able students made good progress in lessons as teachers provided resources that were well adapted to meet their needs. Emphasis on geographical terms and definitions supports work on literacy and many students used specialist terminology fluently. Work seen in students' exercise books showed variation in attainment, with evidence of students being set unchallenging work in some groups. Staff changes have contributed to this variation. The most recent work completed by the students is more challenging and, by the end of Year 9, students have made sound progress.

182. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Students show a good understanding of a range of topics and have developed geographical skills and the application of them well. Students in Year 11 showed a good understanding of the growth of the new technologies industry. Higher-attaining students made very good progress in their coursework projects, in some cases gaining full marks. The work of lower-attaining students (particularly boys) shows weaknesses in literacy skills but their diagrammatic work is better.

183. Teaching is good; in several lessons it is very good. Where teaching is good it is characterised by very good lesson plans, a variety of practical learning activities and the good use of plenary work at appropriate points of the lesson. Good questioning techniques lead to students being engaged in the lesson and being willing to answer questions and discuss the topic. The most successful lessons involved several activities that were varied and challenging. The work in Year 11 was excellent and

required students to work in groups of four to construct a sketch map. It involved physical movement around the room, discussion within the group and careful thought. In another lesson, Year 7 students used several different resources, including photographs and eyewitness accounts, to produce a newspaper article about an earthquake in San Francisco. Not all teachers have all these strengths: where teaching was satisfactory it was characterised by over-long, teacher-led introductions, a lack of variety and unchallenging activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their passion for the subject with their students. Teachers know their students well and skilfully adapt questions and tasks to enable students of all abilities to succeed. Students respond well to the encouragement given by their teachers and therefore learn in a supportive environment. Homework is set regularly by teachers and, in the best practice, challenges the student. Work done in class and at home is marked regularly and in many cases the teacher's comments help the student to improve by setting clear targets for the next piece of work.

184. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They work hard in lessons and show enthusiasm for geography. The mixed seating arrangement of boys and girls works well and encourages discussion and collaborative work. Most students try hard throughout lessons, and those who do not are effectively challenged by the teacher. Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
185. Leadership of geography is good, with clear aims and vision. Priorities for further development are challenging and realistic. Management is also good. Staff work closely to develop learning activities, schemes of work and assessments which contribute to the effective work of the department. Students' performance data are used to a limited extent and this should be an area for future development. Resources are good; very effective use is made of laptop computers and data projectors. Accommodation is good and is located in a suite of rooms of good size and layout. Reporting to parents is just satisfactory but work needs to be done to develop a system that reports on progress and attainment. There have been some staffing issues that have led to some difficulties in continuity for students, the collection of assessment scores and in record keeping.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Lively and enthusiastic teaching supported by good subject knowledge.
- Detailed planning which ensures that time is used well in lessons.
- The behaviour, attitudes and response of students.
- Strong leadership and management.
- The development of literacy skills.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of, and access to, ICT.
- Students' knowledge of their own learning through the quality and use of ongoing assessment.

186. The standards achieved in history by the end of Year 9 are good and above national norms. Students make particularly good progress in the development of the skills of historical investigation and causation across Years 7, 8 and 9. In Year 7, students studying the reasons for the Roman invasion of Britain could identify, and were

beginning to prioritise, a range of different causes from the documents they were using. By Year 9, students writing about the dropping of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima balanced conflicting motives and supported their arguments with evidence selected from a wide range of different sources.

187. Students demonstrate an increasing confidence in their ability to produce extended answers to historical questions. By the end of Year 9 they structure their answers logically and answer questions in detail making good use of historical evidence.
188. By the end of Year 11 the standards achieved by students are broadly in line with those achieved nationally. The most able students do well, gaining a higher proportion of A\*-B grades than the national norm. The overall percentage of those gaining grades A\*-C was below national norms. This is due to the under-performance of boys, particularly those of average ability. The least able students achieve well, at least in line with national expectations. Students make better progress in the skills of history than they do in securing their understanding of factual detail.
189. Progress in the skill of evaluating evidence is good, with students in Year 10 questioning the reliability of evidence. For example, when looking at a quote from Hitler they distinguished between the biased nature of the opinions in the document and the reliability of the source as evidence of Hitler's viewpoint. The discussion of the evidence was a very good example of historical debate and demonstrated a high level of skill in oral communication as well as the ability to evaluate evidence. The coursework produced by students in Year 11 demonstrates their ability to select, use and analyse documentary evidence to explain the significance of the Stretham pumping engine in the development of the Fens.
190. Teaching in history is good overall and is often very good with many excellent features. Both of the teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to enliven their lessons as well as to challenge and capture the interest of students. In the best lessons very good planning ensures a good match between the learning and the activities chosen to achieve it. Time is used well and a very good range of teaching and learning activities is used. In a Year 8 lesson about the reasons for the failure of the Spanish Armada students discussed a map, watched a video, examined conflicting accounts of the event and then completed a structured written task. The range of activities ensured good progress in knowledge, skills and understanding. In the double lessons in Year 10 it is much harder to use time effectively and maintain the pace of learning.
191. Good use is made of starter activities such as sorting cards to analyse evidence about the changing role of women in China. In the best lessons this leads into other activities which develop understanding further. The teachers do not yet make good use of plenaries to review and reinforce the learning.
192. Very good use is made of challenging, open-ended questions which develop students' skills in discussion. They are encouraged to discuss moral issues and gain an understanding of the development of different cultures and societies.
193. Written tasks are very well structured, with good teaching of the skill of extended writing. In a lesson for Year 7 about the Roman invasion of Britain, students discussed the style of writing required for their essay, including the connecting phrases needed to link paragraphs together. Written tasks are often differentiated, with good use being made of writing frames. Students with special educational needs are well supported by both the teacher and support staff.

194. Work is marked regularly and students are often given advice as to how to improve their work. A range of standardised assessment tasks is used in Years 7, 8 and 9 to check progress against National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11, good use is made of data to compare performance with expectations. Despite this, students themselves are unclear about the level they are working at and how they could improve their work.
195. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Students are keen to learn, are interested in the subject and work very well together. They are encouraged to participate in discussions and their answers are valued. They enjoy the challenge posed by open-ended questions and the range of different learning experiences they are given. The fieldwork visits to Ely, Ypres and Stretham are well supported and enjoyed by students.
196. The department is very well led and managed. Clear priorities are set for development, and the two teachers work very well together. The work of the department is monitored and evaluated, with particularly good use being made of data to identify underachievement. Good use is made of resources and the two history classrooms are very well cared for including a good variety of displays.
197. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although the results at GCSE have declined, the number of students studying history at GCSE level has doubled. Assessment procedures have improved. The department has replenished its book stock and, although the use of ICT has improved, it is still insufficient.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory** where taught as a discrete subject, but further development is needed across the curriculum.

### Strengths

- Consistently good, sometimes excellent, teaching in discrete lessons.
- Teachers work hard to ensure students' success.
- A comprehensive database is used to track students' progress in Key Stage 4.
- Special needs students are fully integrated into all lessons.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- New schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4 are needed.
- Improve the ratio of computers to students to match national levels.
- Map ICT programme of study coverage in both taught and cross-curricular lessons.
- Record and report cross-curricular ICT capability.
- Develop and spread good assessment and coursework monitoring practice.

198. By the end of Year 9 teacher assessments for the last three years have been in line with national expectations, ranging from 72 per cent achieving Level 5 and above in 2000, 70 per cent in 2001, to 67 per cent in 2002. The downward trend is attributable to teachers improving their understanding of the expectations of the National Curriculum. Boys and girls are now achieving equally. In Year 11, full-course GCSE passes at A\*-C grades were 26 per cent in 2000 and 78 per cent in 2001, with short courses at 11 per cent and 51 per cent respectively, in the previous option system. With the change to a short course for all in 2002, 35 per cent achieved A\*-C grades, below national levels. However, this year many students in Year 11 entered for the earlier exam achieved a 80 per cent A\*-C pass rate and Year 10 students achieved a 61 per cent A\*-C pass rate.

199. By the end of Year 9, students have made satisfactory progress from a variety of starting points to arrive at average standards within the taught units. In Year 7, students create a publication for a department in the college. Having considered possible layouts for text and images for homework they use these ideas quickly to position text, logos and images on screen. They are confident users of Publisher, copy and paste text, and resize and manipulate it for best effects. In French, students use ICT to reinforce and learn spellings. They study lists of words for a period of their choice and then interact with the software until their spellings are correct. Students of all abilities are well catered for as the tasks become more challenging. Faster students learn how to type accented characters using dead keys. In Year 8 science students combine scientific knowledge and ICT well. They produce a PowerPoint presentation imagining they are travel agents selling a holiday location on a planet in the solar system. Students are very confident with the software and work enthusiastically on their slides. Gifted and talented students display initiative and imagination when working independently. All students make good use of text, different fonts, colour, images and special effects in their slides. They are imaginative and include humour in their presentations which are of above-average standards. In Year 9, students are introduced to higher level, desk-top publishing skills for the production of a holiday leaflet. They are taught how to discriminate between good and bad leaflets and consider the criteria for the effectiveness of a publication. They learn to appreciate that different forms of information can be combined to create meaning and impact. Students evaluate professionally produced leaflets and then use their knowledge to plan their own designs. They answer questions confidently. Students with SEN and a disabled student are fully included in the lesson. Girls and boys achieve equally.
200. Current standards continue to improve and the quality of work is satisfactory. In Year 10, students work on their examination coursework tasks, either a children's book or a promotion package for a company. They use a variety of software confidently and produce well-designed layouts, import text and images, experiment with styles and colour in the effective design of business cards, headed paper, flyers and books. They also annotate hard copy well with evaluative comments. Their progress is satisfactory. In an impressive Y11 lesson, students video-conferenced with an expert in communications based in Gloucestershire. Students had previously developed an awareness of the moral and ethical aspects of ICT. Selected students gave their presentations, either in pairs or individually, on future developments in mobile videophones and the advantages and disadvantages of web camera use in society. Students demonstrated that they had very good subject knowledge. The attitude of the whole group was very good and the expert was very impressed. ICT is also being used effectively as a teaching and learning tool in English for desktop publishing; in science, including developments in interactive homeworks; in art and design for creative use of digital camera imaging; in PE for multimedia and video recording in the performance analysis suite; in mathematics; and in geography. Students' overall achievement is satisfactory.
201. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in discrete lessons is good, with some excellent lessons seen, and satisfactory in lessons across the curriculum. In taught lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and confident delivery skills. Good, clear lesson introductions enable students to quickly understand task requirements. Sometimes the projector is used effectively to explain routes through software. Lesson objectives are clearly displayed and are used in short plenary sessions to test students' understanding. Key words are displayed well in classrooms. All students are monitored well in lessons, and examination students are given good verbal feedback on their coursework. Support materials are produced to ensure students of all abilities achieve success and these also provide strategies to ensure lesson continuity when technical problems occur. All students are fully included in all lessons and make steady

progress. Teachers work hard and move lessons at a fast pace. Class sizes are large but relationships are good, allowing students to work together well. Where lessons are less effective, resource materials and the projector are not used to support teaching. Several teachers are now using PowerPoint presentations for lesson introductions.

202. Students are keen to learn and enjoy their lessons. Behaviour is at least good or very good in the majority of lessons. Sometimes it is excellent. Students listen well to lesson introductions, are challenged by the tasks and sustain their concentration throughout lessons. There are good relationships in all groups. Many students use computers at lunchtimes and after school.
203. The administration of the subject is satisfactory but management and co-ordination are unsatisfactory. Essential elements for the co-ordination of the subject across the curriculum are not in place. Common schemes of work and a scheme for the National Strategy are needed. A centralised recording and reporting system is needed for all students. All teachers need an awareness and understanding of the programmes of study and level descriptors for ICT. Target-setting is not yet firmly embedded in teaching and learning, and the monitoring of teaching of ICT across the curriculum is not taking place. More formative assessment of coursework is needed with a consistent approach across the department. Whilst the National Strategy is being implemented, resources are inadequate and many old computers need replacing. However, a very detailed database is used to track students' overall performance in Key Stage 4 and this is being developed for use in Key Stage 3. Examination data analysis is also used. The co-ordinator has a heavy workload, teaching in two departments, and does not have the benefit of a full-time technician, but he is supported well by an enthusiastic learning support assistant. An action plan is moving the subject forward. An electronic learning suite and website are being developed but there is an urgent need for an intranet to take learning forward for all students. The co-ordinator supports new staff well, is involved with initial teacher training and keeps abreast of examination board requirements as an examiner.
204. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. A short-course GCSE is now in the core curriculum for all Key Stage 4 students. Although attainment was below the national average last year it has improved this year, on the evidence of the work seen during the inspection. The quality of teaching in discrete ICT is frequently good, or better, and in many subjects staff confidence in the use of ICT has improved. There continues to be an absence of schemes of work, but the college now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Management of the subject continues to be an area of concern.



## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Before the week of the inspection, provision for modern foreign languages had been satisfactory and improving. During the inspection week, provision was unsatisfactory because staffing change and absence were having a serious negative impact on the effectiveness of the subject.

### Strengths

- Emphatic and effective focus on teaching students how to improve their own work in Years 10 and 11.
- High expectations in upper sets and German lessons.
- Attainment in German.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards achieved by boys, and use of teaching strategies which are effective for boys.
- Progress made by students in lower sets.
- Active use of marking, clear task criteria, and analysis of Key Stage 3 assessment.
- Data, in order to inform students about their performance, and how to improve it.

205. Over the last three years, teacher assessment shows that by the end of Year 9 students have reached standards which broadly reflect the national pattern. Significantly fewer boys have reached Level 5, and there have been up to three times more boys at Level 3 than girls.

206. In lessons, most students in upper sets, and many of those in second sets, show the capacity to reach the desired levels. In Year 7, they already write prompted compositions about themselves and their college. By Year 9, they write longer compositions (for example about diet, holidays and leisure) with less support. They form the past tense, understand longer printed and recorded texts, and sustain conversations which contain more complex sentences. In third sets, most students operate at very basic levels which are below what is usually seen in this age group. They understand, say and write single words or phrases with very limited fluency, accuracy and confidence.

207. The proportion of students gaining upper GCSE grades in French over the last three years has been below the national figure, with a steady downward trend to a very low figure in 2002. For two of the last three years German GCSE results showed a downward movement but improved substantially in 2002 to a level which was still below previous performance. Boys' performance has been very weak in French. Relatively few boys study German, and their performance is consistently lower than the girls'.

208. In lessons, the proportion of current students in Years 10 and 11 whose work reflects the requirements of GCSE grades A\* to C is close to the national expectation, and significantly higher in German. The use of written course work is encouraging improved written outcomes. These students use more adventurous and original language in their spoken and written work, but their range of vocabulary (especially in German, where they have had less time), and their poor recall of it, limits their confidence and effectiveness in reading and listening comprehension. Students in lower French sets produce very brief written and spoken responses, and their understanding is limited to short and uncomplicated texts.

209. During the week of the inspection, two staff timetables were operated by supply teachers, one of whom was not a languages specialist. This has influenced the profile of teaching and learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but with big variations in quality. Teaching is good in German and in Key Stage 4, but there are weaknesses in French. This leads to good progress and learning in German and in Key Stage 4, but there is some unsatisfactory learning in Key Stage 3 French. In Years 7 to 9, high expectations in middle and upper sets ensure that students aim high and produce more than just basic responses. Teachers make it clear to students how the language works, and how to make more complex sentences, so that they can write and speak from memory, and can add extra detail. Lessons start and finish in an orderly and organised way, but sometimes the start of lessons is not productive or active, so that students (especially boys) lose interest. Sometimes there is not enough repetition or reinforcement of key words and phrases during a lesson to give students mastery of sounds and to ensure that words and meanings are memorised. In some lessons, the proportion of time spent on explanation and questioning of individual students reduces the pace of learning and leaves many students inactive for too long.
210. Students with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in lower sets because unsatisfactory behaviour impedes learning. Many boys make less progress in their learning than they could, often because of their own attitudes or behaviour. Their particular needs and ways of learning are not systematically addressed. Some good initiatives derived from the Literacy Strategy (such as word frames, a focus on how language works, and an insistence on using connectives to make more complex sentences) are in constant use. This is having a clear, positive impact on the ability of students in upper and middle sets to manipulate language, but it has not adequately addressed the basic literacy problems of students in lower sets. Teaching is good in Key Stage 4, primarily because it is so strongly focused on enabling students to meet the requirements of the GCSE examination. Course work is skilfully used to assist students in improving their own work. Teachers give clear explanations of how to do the things needed in order to succeed. There is a continuous expectation that students will try to add extra elements to their work which will lead to higher grades.
211. The response of most students in their lessons, especially in German, is good. They behave well, follow instructions, listen attentively, and are keen to learn. Most students respond well to teachers' challenges to produce more complex work. In third sets there is a concentration of students with learning or behaviour difficulties. Here, response is less positive and the desire to work is less evident, with the result that the progress of individuals and of the whole class is slowed down.
212. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department is creative and energetic, and in two years she has promoted many practices and values which have the potential to improve students' motivation and attainment. She has led the department in exploiting elements of the Key Stage 3 literacy initiative in order to give students the skills and knowledge they need to understand how language works, and then to use the language creatively. New resources and schemes of work have provided a coherent and realistic programme of study. Unfortunately, staffing instability has had a negative impact on her ability to implement policies and strategies effectively and continuously.
213. Improvement since the last inspection has been positive but incomplete. During the current head of department's leadership, significant improvements have begun to materialise. In just two years it has not been possible to complete the cycle of improvement, and implementation is now prejudiced by staff instability. There is now more intensive and effective use of ICT. Students' attainment from Years 7 to 11 is better. Students are now better able to work independently and to produce longer

written and spoken compositions. The attainment of boys, and the low proportion of boys in the upper sets, continues to be unsatisfactory, and there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3.
- The quality of day-to-day assessment and written and verbal feedback to students is excellent.
- Literacy skills are taught very effectively in music lessons.
- Homework tasks are well planned and of very good quality.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop the use of ICT in music at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

214. The music department consists of one full-time head of department and one part time teacher. The head of department was on maternity leave between April and December before the inspection. The head of department's timetable was covered by a series of non-specialist supply teachers. This has had a negative impact on the attainment and progress of some of the students.
215. Teacher assessments of students' attainment recorded at the end of Year 9 were above national averages in 2001 and 2002.
216. In 2001 and 2002, GCSE results were broadly in line with national averages based on a small number of entries. The number of students entered for the examination is in line with national averages. In 2000, the results were below national averages; 53 per cent A\*-C compared to a national average of 66 per cent
217. Standards of current Year 9 students are above those normally seen. In Years 7 and 8, students benefit from an above average amount of curricular time for music. This has a positive affect on their progress and their attainment. In Year 9, the students receive about 50 minutes a week for music. This is slightly less than normally found for this age group.
218. Students have a good understanding of the music they are learning about. They describe and evaluate pieces they compose and listen to, using an appropriate musical vocabulary and good analytical skills. For example, in Year 7, students are learning about musical clichés. When composing their own music to accompany scenes from a silent film they draw upon what they have learned from the listening tasks and apply it to their own work with a high level of understanding. They all use features such as repeating patterns, chromatic scales and dissonance. The middle-and higher-attaining students use evaluative words confidently to describe the effect of the use of these features.
219. Students in Years 7 and 8 sing effectively in parts and with an appropriate sense of style; for example, when singing a Cradle song in Year 7 the singing is smooth, controlled and quiet. When learning the Rivers of Babylon in Year 8 the students follow the teacher's directions carefully and respond well to visual cues such as watching the

teacher's hand closing to denote the end of the phrase. They also use appropriate musical vocabulary, such as legato, to describe their singing.

220. Students' keyboard skills are less secure. An example of this arose when some Year 7 students were trying to play fast repeating patterns to describe a car chase. They struggled to do this effectively because they were trying to play with their hands flat on the keys. The students' skills in using ICT for creating, refining and manipulating sounds is underdeveloped.
221. Standards of students work in Year 11 are in line with those normally seen. The GCSE students have a secure understanding of the styles of music they study, such as serialism. They identify key features using appropriate musical vocabulary such as inversion, retrograde, dissonance, consonance, transposition and fanfare. In Year 10 the students begin to use these features effectively to develop their own composition based on a note row.
222. Students' compositions on tape and CD in Year 11 represent a diverse range of styles, such as serialism, jazz and pop. They make effective use of structure such as verse, chorus and rondo, and there are some memorable and imaginative ideas. The use of ICT for composition is underdeveloped, particularly in Year 10. The students have made good progress in understanding the areas of study for the new examination syllabus and in exploring these through composition.
223. The attitudes and behaviour of students in music are very good overall. Students are very well motivated when working in small groups in Years 7 and 8. Their relationships are very good. They are well organised on task and talk confidently about their work. All of the students join in sensibly with singing activities and make a real effort to improve. They listen sensitively to one another when singing and performing in small groups. They are very keen to answer questions and contribute ideas. In Year 9, students working in small groups are sometimes off task and not as well motivated.
224. The quality of teaching and learning are very good overall. The progress students make in their learning is very good in Years 7 and 8 because of the very good teaching and above average time for music. The way that material is presented effectively challenges all students regardless of prior attainment. The teaching of singing is very good and is particularly well focused on teaching students how to improve the quality of their singing. This includes good warm-up activities; for example, breathing, stretching, making vowel and consonant sounds and changing dynamics. Very good feedback is given to the students through comments such as 'keep the pitch even, don't stop the note until I close my fingers'. The students respond well to this; they watch the cues carefully and this enables them to improve the quality of their work. The students are taught to analyse what and how they are singing and to use appropriate musical vocabulary such as legato, glissando and dynamics to describe their work.
225. Homework activities are meaningful and structured. The department creates homework task sheets for each unit of work. These include activities such as vocal tasks, learning words such as overture, aria, recitative when doing a unit of work based on the opera Bluebeard's Castle by Bartok in Year 8 and writing evaluations of compositions. The homework work cards give clear guidance on how to make the writing evaluative.
226. Day-to-day assessment and marking are excellent. Students are given very thorough verbal and written feedback about their work. Written work is regularly marked and gives clear and individual feedback. Through these comments students are taught how to improve both their evaluations and their practical skills. When appraising music on CD or one another's composition, students are taught to use musical vocabulary and to

justify their answers and opinions through skilful and probing questions.

227. Double lessons in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11 are always very well planned and structured to maintain pace and challenge. In Year 9 students only have one music lesson a week. They make less progress in their learning as a result of less curricular time and limited access to equipment such as ICT and pop and rock instruments. Year 9 students are also particularly affected by one of the teaching rooms being too small. The accommodation is well managed by teachers, but the cramped space makes it difficult for students to hear and perform their work properly.
228. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is good. Performing, composing and appraising are effectively integrated and the scheme has clear aims and objectives. The department has developed units of work and activities for teaching the new GCSE examination syllabus at Key Stage 4, but this has not yet been developed into a scheme with the same clarity of objectives.
229. The assessment and marking of students' work in music since January is very good and has had a particularly positive impact on students' appraisal and evaluation skills. In Year 10, students are given excellent individual targets, with strategies for achieving these. The department has begun to analyse trends in GCSE results, but the monitoring of Key Stage 3 data is underdeveloped.
230. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is detailed and well-focused documentation. The department is particularly good at embracing recent, whole-college policies such as literacy, assessment and homework to help raise standards in music lessons. Monitoring and evaluation of the department are good.
231. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. There are sufficient practice rooms and one large teaching room. However, the second teaching room is too small. This makes whole-class singing and listening work very difficult and, although well managed by teachers, affects progress, particularly of Year 9 students. Resources for ICT in music are unsatisfactory. There are only two computers in the department and there is no Internet access within the department.
232. Progress since the previous inspection is good. Standards have improved at Key Stage 3, and vocal work that was underdeveloped at the time of the previous inspection is now a strength.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Rising GCSE results with the proportion of A\*-C grades well above the national average.
- Excellent leadership and management of the subject which gives a very clear purpose and direction for the subject's future development.
- Very committed subject teachers who have good subject knowledge and develop a positive climate for learning.
- Very good curricular and extra-curricular activities open to all.
- Very good linking of assessment to National Curriculum levels and GCSE requirements which are effectively shared with students.
- Teachers' lesson planning provides good opportunities for students to take some responsibility for their own learning.
- Very good use of ICT to develop students' understanding of the subject.

### Areas for development

- Review the policy for marking GCSE work to ensure a consistency of approach across all teachers and ensure students are clear what it is they need to do to improve further.
- Review reports to parents to ensure they are clear about what activities have been taught, the good assessment information available is shared with parents and specific individual targets for future development are set.

233. By the end of Year 9 the majority of students are performing at a level that is typical for their age and there are a good number who are producing good performances in a range of activities. In the most recent Year 9 teacher assessments, 79 per cent of students were achieving, or exceeding, the expected level of performance for their age. This is slightly above the national average of 72 per cent, with boys achieving at a slightly higher level than girls. Students of all abilities make good progress and acquire a good knowledge, understanding and level of skill in the main sports undertaken. A particular strength is the development of the knowledge and understanding of fitness and health strand of the National Curriculum. Many know about the effect of exercise on their body and the importance of taking part in sport for their future health and enjoyment. For example, in a Year 8 rounders lesson, many students could identify the importance of warming up before exercise, suggest activities to do this and several identified the major muscle groups being stretched. This is laying a very good foundation for the GCSE later.

234. By the end of their time in the college most students are at least working at a level which is typical for their age. There are, however, a significant number who are working above this level. Knowledge and understanding of physical education is generally better for those who opt to study the subject at GCSE, which is a popular option. Many of these students are making good progress, particularly in the theoretical parts of the course. For example, in a Year 10 class, by the end of the lesson students had developed a good understanding of the various elements of the media, the control media coverage has on many major sporting events and the interdependence sport and the media have on each other. GCSE results over the last three years have shown a significant improvement. In last year's GCSE results all students entered gained a pass grade, and the proportion gaining grades A\*-C, at 63 per cent, was significantly above the national average of 54 per cent. Although slightly less than a third of the group were girls a higher proportion of these gained an A\*-C grade when compared with boys. However, boys in particular did significantly better in physical education when compared

to their examination results in other subjects.

235. Teaching in the subject is good, with some very good and excellent features. Teachers establish very good working relationships with their students, set very clear objectives for what they want to cover in each lesson, explain these fully to their students and review them at the end of the lesson to ensure they have been met. Teachers have high expectations of students, instil in them an enthusiasm for the subject and support them well to achieve a good standard of performance. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of physical education is very good and they make very good use of questioning to ensure students have understood what they have been taught. Lessons are very well planned and teachers make very good use of appropriate methods to help students fully learn what they have been taught. For example, in the last Year 11 GCSE lesson prior to students starting examination leave the teacher used a very good PowerPoint presentation as an aid to revision and instilled in the students confidence and a desire to do well. Teachers know their students very well, and those with special educational needs are set tasks that are appropriate to their abilities. They are given very good support and, as a result, these students make good progress. More-able students are well supported to achieve standards in line with their ability and their achievements are celebrated by the department.
236. Students' standards of behaviour are very good and they respond well to the demands the teaching makes upon them. They are keen to do well. Most listen carefully and follow instructions well and at the same time show high levels of effort and self-motivation. Working relationships are always very positive. Students show respect for each other, for teachers and other adults and work hard to improve their own standard of performance. Those students who are not able to actively participate in lessons because of injury or minor illness are engaged well in the lesson, often through involvement as a coach, official or helping with resources. Students are generally very aware of the importance of safety. For example, one Year 9 student who has been trained to use the bowling machine in a cricket lesson, did so very safely, thus freeing the teacher to teach and coach other students.
237. The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good range of activities and includes a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The college has a significant number of students who have been successful in gaining representative honours in a number of sporting activities. There are good opportunities for students to study the subject at GCSE. All students currently in Year 10 have had the opportunity to undertake the Junior Sports Leaders Award as part of their core physical education. This initiative is very worthwhile and involves these students in working with younger students in some of the college's contributory primary schools during their physical education lessons. The department has played a leading role locally in using the NIKE scheme for raising girls' achievement in physical education and sport. This is starting to have a positive impact on girls' attitude and standards of performance. Teacher assessment of students is thorough and accurate and effectively shared with students. Assessment against GCSE requirements is particularly good, and again these are shared with students, targets are set and students are clear what it is they need to do to improve. There is, however, a need to ensure this information is reported to parents in a much more informative way.
238. The director of physical education provides excellent leadership and a very clear purpose and direction for the subject's future development in the college. At the same time he is very well supported by departmental colleagues in the drive to raise standards in the subject. The departmental documentation is very detailed and of a very high standard. The director of physical education has worked hard with other

colleagues to draw together a successful bid for specialist Sports College status, which comes into effect from September 2003. Planning for this is very good and there is a shared vision and drive in the department to ensure this future development is successful.

239. Accommodation and facilities for the subject are very good; they include a sports hall, gym, hard-court areas, fields, outdoor swimming pool and a dedicated GCSE theory room. The multi-gym is in a small cramped area, but there are plans to develop this as part of the sports college development. The department has also converted a large store cupboard into a 'performance analysis suite' with very good ICT facilities including a 'smart board'. This was put to excellent use in a Year 7 lesson when a video recording of a top-class athlete was slowed down to analyse the sprint start technique. Students then used this analysis to develop their own performance. Other equipment and resources are generally good.
240. The subject received a very positive report at the last inspection and has continued to make good progress. The report highlighted two issues for action: the unevenness of the playing fields; and the need to systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the department. These have been fully met. The playing fields have undergone a good deal of remedial work and are now in a good state, and the director of physical education is very effective in regularly monitoring teaching and colleagues' planning and assessment records.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Satisfactory teaching despite recent staffing difficulties.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.
- The subject provides opportunities for students' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Curricular organisation and provision in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management.
- The variety of teaching and learning styles .
- Resources for learning so that they more closely match students' learning needs.
- Assessment practices so that all students know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- Using ICT to support teaching and learning.

241. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are sound. Most students make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of religions. They take up opportunities to reflect on their own values and experiences in the light of their learning about, for example, Christianity and Hinduism. Students enter the college with mixed prior learning experiences from their primary school religious education. By the end of Year 9, students attain standards that are in line with the expectations of the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus. In their work on Islam, students in Year 9 know that keeping the Five Pillars of faith is very important to Muslims and influences the way they lead their life. Students have a sound grasp of the important terms associated with belief. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where students explained what the word Pilgrimage meant and gave examples of places of pilgrimage for Christians. Students are beginning to recognise that religion can



influence the way people respond to moral issues. In a Year 8 lesson, students discussed crime and punishment and compared the teaching in the Old Testament with the teaching of Jesus. The majority of students make steady progress across Years 7 to 9. The progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The most-able students do not make the rapid progress they are capable of because there are too few opportunities for them to extend their understanding through extension activities and research of the important beliefs and concepts on which religions such as Islam and Christianity are based.

242. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are poor. The college has recently introduced a short-course GCSE in religious education. Students begin the course in Year 9 and complete it in Year 10. Students currently in Year 10 will be the first group to be entered for the examination. In Year 11, students follow a non-examination course. In Year 10 examination groups, standards are poor because students work at levels that are well below those expected for their ages and they are making slow progress in their knowledge and understanding of the topics included in the GCSE course. Students only study religious education for a short time in Year 10; this means that they have insufficient time to build on the work they have covered in first year of the GCSE course in Year 9 or develop the skills needed to be successful in the examination. In their work on Islam and Christianity, students demonstrate knowledge of the main features of the faiths but show little understanding of the important beliefs and principles that underpin them. For example, in a revision lesson on Islam, students could describe Muslim prayer but found it difficult to explain how regular prayer could help strengthen and support faith. Students' understanding of important terms associated with religion, such as 'symbolism', is weak and well below that usually seen at this stage of the GCSE course. In their writing, students' work lacks the detail, explanation and evaluative comment usually expected at this age. In the non-examination classes, students attain standards that are well below the expectations of the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus. In their discussion work on Civil Rights, students in Year 11 stated their opinions on the issues raised but found it difficult to support their views with evidence from the material studied. In their project work, students knew about the ways that people such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X fought against racism in America but struggled to explain how their faith may have influenced their actions. Students with special educational needs make slow progress because the work is not adapted to meet their learning needs. The most-able students do not achieve the high standards they are capable of because their work shows that they have not begun to develop the higher level discussion and evaluation skills.
243. Over the past year, the college has faced recruitment difficulties. Until very recently the subject has been taught by temporary agency staff. The newly appointed teacher has only been in post for a few weeks but has worked hard to quickly familiarise himself with the schemes of work and create a relevant module of work for the non-examination groups in Years 10 and 11.
244. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well organised. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson where efficient planning of the activities enabled students entered for the GCSE examination to work through a revision pack prepared by the teacher whilst others continued with work on Civil Rights. Firm control of students' behaviour ensures that no time is wasted by idle chatting. The teacher has sound subject knowledge. As a result, students' learning is enriched when they ask questions. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher used his knowledge of Islam to correct misconceptions held by the students about the faith. In another lesson, the teacher's knowledgeable explanation of the use of a prayer mat helped students understand more about the way Muslims pray. The teacher works hard to encourage students to develop their own opinions on moral issues. In a Year 8 lesson, students were asked to consider their

own opinion on the death penalty. The discussion that followed helped students to realise that people hold different points of view on moral issues and that sometimes these views are influenced by faith.

245. Across all years there are aspects of the teaching that are less effective and require improvement. Learning objectives are not always made sufficiently clear to students so they do not know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Lesson activities lack variety and there are too few opportunities for group work and independent research. In a Year 8 lesson on crime and punishment, the students did not learn well because the task of answering questions from the board was unexciting and did not help them to further their understanding of the complexity of the moral issues. Lesson activities are not sufficiently matched to the learning needs of all students. This lack of clarity in matching work to students' needs means that the most able spend too much time doing work which they find is too easy. They are often not challenged to think philosophically about religion or to analyse first-hand sources of religious ideas and practice. Insufficient attention is given to supporting students with poor literacy skills. In a Year 7 lesson on Hinduism, some students with special educational needs could not complete the task because they found difficulty in understanding the text. In Year 10 lessons, students entered for the GCSE are achieving low standards because they are not given help in developing writing skills such as discussion and evaluation that they will need to be successful in the examination. Marking of students' work gives encouragement but, across all years, there are too few comments about how standards can be improved. Homework is rarely set but when it is, tasks are not sufficiently structured to enable students to enrich and extend their learning.
246. The great majority of students are well motivated in lessons. They are interested in the topics covered and willingly work on the tasks set. They are keen to answer questions, and younger students volunteer to read to the rest of the class. Students show respect for each other's views. In a Year 10 lesson on Civil Rights, students listened patiently to those who were giving their views about racism. Behaviour is generally good.
247. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is broad and meets the requirements of the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Too little time is allocated to the subject during these years to enable the requirements of the programme of study in the Agreed Syllabus to be met. The modular organisation of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 adversely affects the learning for many students. This was seen in the GCSE groups where those students who begin the course in Year 9 only receive one short module of religious education during Year 10 before they sit the examination. This is insufficient to enable them to prepare adequately for the examination. Through opportunities to study several faiths and consider moral issues, religious education makes a useful contribution to students' personal development.
248. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. Due to staffing difficulties, there is currently no permanent co-ordinator for the subject. The head of faculty is aware of what needs to be done to improve the subject but there are no clear plans and strategies for implementing developments. Resources are unsatisfactory. There are not enough textbooks, videos, artefacts and other materials to support students in lessons with the result that most of the learning is based on using unexciting, photocopied materials. There are inadequate procedures in place for assessing students' work in the subject. This means that teachers have little information on students' progress in religious education to help them with planning lessons and setting targets for improvement. Very little use is made of information technology to enhance students' learning in the subject.
249. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because many of the

weaknesses noted then remain. Although there is now some provision for religious education in Year 11 as well as Year 10 it is still not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The low standards reported in Years 10 and 11 remain. Resources in the subject continue to be unsatisfactory, and procedures for assessing students' work remain unsatisfactory.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Appropriate units of work taught in several subjects offer a good basis for developing citizenship to the rigour required.
- Students engage readily in learning that involves them in considering issues that effect society in local, national and global contexts.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of communicating ideas and arguments to support a personal viewpoint.
- Planning the effective coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study.
- Co-ordinating the contributions of different subjects to citizenship.
- Making students fully aware of when citizenship is being taught.
- Assessing students' capability.

250. No lessons specifically designated as citizenship were observed during the inspection, but lessons were seen in design and technology, history and religious education which had implicit coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study for citizenship. Discussions were held with students about their experiences of citizenship and a sample of PSHE books was inspected.

251. Students are working below the expectation of the National Curriculum at age 14. In PSHE they gain a sound knowledge and understanding of the rules that underpin the college as a community and aspects of how the law relates to young people in society. In religious education in Year 8, they consider crime and punishment and give reasons for and against the death penalty. The views they expressed about 'the penalty matching the crime' were superficial in the lesson observed. Students reflect appropriately on moral questions; for example, 'Is stealing from an elderly lady the same as shoplifting from a department store?' They understand that different groups in society contribute to life in the community. For example, in Year 8 they consider how the college's successful bid to become a sports college has the potential for involving students in other schools and the community beyond the college. However, they only have a basic understanding of the global community and economic and environmental issues facing the world. Their knowledge of how government works at national and local level, and the international role of the United Nations and Commonwealth, is below what is expected for their age.

252. Students have a satisfactory understanding of medical, legal and personal consequences of drug abuse and know the main drug types. Discussion about personal lifestyles enables them to be equipped sufficiently to make choices as young citizens. Although much of citizenship lends itself to discussion, students written accounts are well below the quality expected and are often very short. Overall, written work lacks depth. Students get some satisfactory opportunities for developing skills of participation and taking responsible action. They undertake reception duties and participate in tutor group discussions to express views to be considered by the recently

formed college council. Students in Year 9 have taken part in a referendum on the adoption of the Euro currency. There is little written evidence to show that students have reflected on these practical experiences of citizenship.

253. At age 16, students' attainment remains below the level expected. The work they do with tutors and some subject staff is beginning to help them in assessing their personal qualities and setting goals. Work in a range of subjects, such as English, encourages students to present themselves confidently. Art and design and drama provide good opportunities for understanding how others see their successes and failures. However, these subjects are not taken by all, and citizenship experiences are implicit rather than planned. In Year 10, students increase their knowledge of alcohol, drugs and early sexual activity and this provides them good opportunities to discuss life-style choices at an appropriate level. Activity days include the input of professionals such as those from the police and medical services. Some work in subjects covers content that is normally covered earlier in citizenship, such as civil rights and the role of women in society.
254. Religious education makes a good contribution to students' knowledge and understanding of racial discrimination in society by comparing the stances of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. History provides appropriate learning about gender issues by looking at the paradoxes for women in contemporary China. In design and technology, students consider the opinions of the users of products. However, the citizenship content of these lessons is implicit and students do not recognise what they cover in these lessons makes a contribution to citizenship. In Years 10 and 11, some students take responsible action as tutor group representatives, guides for visitors and helping to organise sports teams. Many are involved in collecting for charities. Skills developed by reflecting on these activities are below average.
255. In the subject lessons where citizenship themes were being taught the quality of teaching was satisfactory and in half the teaching was good. However, this teaching failed to identify that the content was contributing towards citizenship objectives. Individual lessons seen were well organised, but because the contribution to the citizenship curriculum had not been planned teachers did not exploit the contexts to extend students' understanding of citizenship. Evidence from students' work suggests that the lessons observed were typical. In discussion, students in Years 10 and 11 stated that teachers do not indicate when a topic relates to citizenship. They stated that they thought citizenship will be introduced into the curriculum next year. Whilst teaching and tutorial activities do provide some opportunities for active participation and responsible action, with the exception of the Euro-referendum in Year 9, these experiences are primarily related to other objectives for personal and social development rather than to achieve citizenship learning goals. Teaching does not yet promote the recording of students' involvement in community activities within or outside the college.
256. In the lessons observed, students' attitudes varied from excellent to satisfactory. The great majority of students engage readily when exploring topics that consider social justice and diversity. They are equally interested when the context is the college, community, nation or world. Older students state that they would welcome more information on healthy lifestyles.
257. Leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory. Temporary arrangements for co-ordination have been in place until very recently. The subject has not yet been established as a rigorous aspect of study. An audit of the contributions to citizenship of PSHE and different subjects was undertaken about two years ago. Some work is clearly identified within the current PSHE course in Years 7 to 9, but a shortage of teaching time results in superficial coverage. Where citizenship occurs in other

subjects it is not made overt in teachers' planning. Assessment is only made for students' attitudes, but not the standard of their work. The lack of a co-ordinated record of students' achievements and progress in citizenship across Years 7 to 9 makes the statutory reporting of progress to parents at age 14 problematic.

258. Citizenship was not a National Curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.